

Opponents and Identity in Philippians

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Opponents and Identity in Philippians

By

Nina Nikki



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Abbreviations

The abbreviations of both ancient works and modern periodicals and series follow the SBL Handbook of style 2nd edition (Billie Jean Collins, project director; Bob Buller, publishing director; John F. Kutsko, executive director. Georgia: Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014). Journals that do not appear there are written in full.

PART 1

Introduction



Introduction

1 The Questions and the Outline of the Study

The Apostle Paul's letter to the Philippians gives the impression of being a friendly and heartfelt piece of writing. Paul thanks the addressees warmly for their support (Phil 1:3–8, 4:14–16) and encourages them to rejoice always (Phil 2:18, 3:1, see also 1:18). Among the repeated expressions of optimism, however, there are passages that take a remarkably different tone. On several occasions (Phil 1:15–18a; 1:27–30, throughout Phil 3) Paul turns his attention to people, whom he portrays as opponents of some kind. In Paul's depiction, these people pose a threat either to Paul himself, the Philippian church, or both. In Phil 3 Paul launches into some of his most belligerent polemic, calling the opponents “dogs” and “evil workers” (Phil 3:2). With a scornful remark, he also likens their circumcision to mutilation (Phil 3:2). At the end of the same chapter Paul also speaks of “enemies of the cross of Christ”, whose “god is their belly” and “whose glory is in their shame” (Phil 3:18–19).¹ In addition to Phil 3, derogative depictions of enemies are found also in Phil 1:15–18a, where Paul treats some fellow Christ-believers with a peculiar mixture of resentment and acceptance, mainly calling into question the motives behind their preaching activity. In Phil 1:27–30, on the other hand, stark eschatological destruction is predicated on some, who are linked to Paul's current affliction in prison, and who can potentially startle the Philippians as well.

Historical inquiry into Paul's “opponents” and other “enemies” mentioned in the NT has recently been re-evaluated in the wake of the so-called linguistic turn and social constructivism, which both stress that texts do not so much reflect reality as actively construe it. Accordingly, Paul's opponents have been viewed mainly as literary, rhetorical, and ideological constructs. The current study essentially agrees with these insights and shares an awareness of the complex relationship between text and reality. However, it still takes serious interest in historical inquiry and considers it a legitimate project – although much more complicated than previously thought.

From a historical stand point the study aims to identify the opponents mentioned in each instance and to clarify the historical situation behind the letter and the polemical references in particular. The aim is to answer questions such

¹ Biblical quotes in this study are from the NRSV unless otherwise indicated.

as: does Paul refer to same people in all the polemical passages or does he have different groups in mind? Who exactly are these “opponents”, and what is their relationship to Paul and the Philippian addressees? How do they threaten Paul himself or the church? Most notably, this study provides a fresh reconstruction of the difficult relationship between Paul and the Jerusalem based Jewish Christ-believing² community. It is argued that this relationship is reflected at several points in Philippians.

A particular challenge to interpretation is posed by the rhetorically saturated and polemical nature of the texts. Slandorous name-calling and sweeping accusations of moral depravity cannot be read as accurate depictions of the opponents. In order to avoid simplistic, literal readings of the texts, they will be examined in the light of the conventions of ancient polemical rhetoric and subjected to controlled and detailed *mirror-reading*. It will be suggested that, whereas conventional polemic does not yield much historical information, non-conventional remarks such as references to circumcision are more likely to reveal something historically significant.

2 The terms “Jew” and “Judaism” are used in this study with due caution against mistakenly attributing characteristics of later Judaism to the beginning of the Common Era and with awareness of the recent, lively discussion about the correct understanding and translation of the term Ἰουδαῖος. Esler (2003), for example, has opted to use “Judean” for Ἰουδαῖος in order to do justice to the ethnic dimension of the early Jewish identity. Cohen (1999), however, has noted that from the time of the Hasmonean period conversion to Judaism was possible for ethnically non-Israelites, which meant that the term became more culturally and religiously defined. Mason (2007), in his influential article, has made the same point as Esler about the ethnic content of Ἰουδαῖος at least until the third century CE and criticized Cohen for a faulty understanding of the category of “religion”. In defense of the terms “Jewish” and “Christian”, Holmberg (2008) has noted that using certain terminology in discussing the past does not necessarily mean importing all the later usages and definitions along with it. Lately, Reinhartz (2014) has also criticized the increasing trend to use the term Judean and worried that, despite the good intentions, switching terminology could result in letting early Christian texts “off the hook” for their role in anti-Semitism. In this study I choose not to use the term “Christian” and “Christianity” since no single term corresponding to Ἰουδαῖος was yet used in NT times – although, for example, Räisänen (2010, 1) sees no problem in using the term “in a weak sense”. Instead, the term “Christ-believers” is used of those who, in one way or another, held belief in the resurrected Christ as important. Accordingly, the term “Jewish Christ-believers” denotes the phenomenon more commonly referred to as “Jewish Christianity”. The fact that all “Christianity” was and is in some way indebted to Jewish ideology, however, produces an uselessly wide definition of the category, which is why it is used here in relation to ritual observance of the Mosaic Law in particular. This study is not, however, guided, drawn, or limited by the use of certain terminology. On the contrary, it seeks to be descriptive in nature, so that when terms like the ones above are used as shorthands, the reader should have a good sense of their content and not be in danger of being misled towards anachrony.

Despite the challenges of polemical expressions to historical inquiry, they offer a fruitful starting-point for detecting identity formation and maintenance in the text. This study concentrates on the role of opponents in this process. The social psychological *social identity approach* (SIA) is applied to the text in order to understand how and why Paul, for example, exaggerates differences (*polarizes*) between his own group and the opponents, and why the opponents are denigrated and ridiculed to such measure. These actions will be explained as originating in the basic human need for a distinct and positive identity. The role of groups in this process is relevant as they reflect on the individual through his/her *social identity* as a group member. According to the SIA, these functions of *categorization* and *self-enhancement* can only be realized in relation to others, which, in turn, explains the universal use of enemies and “others” in the construction of religious (or any) group identities. Accordingly, Paul regularly emphasizes and exaggerates differences between his own group and the opponents and stresses the superiority of his ingroup: the opponents represent “mutilation”, but members of Paul’s group are “the circumcision” (3:2–3); the opponents work out of “selfish ambition”, but those favorable to Paul are motivated by “love” (1:16–17).

On a more ideological level, this study participates in the discussion about early Christian anti-Judaism by investigating some of the harshest NT texts in this respect. In Phil 3 Paul castigates his “opponents” for their Jewish emphases. He does not only dishonor their circumcision (3:2), but also seems to equate their food regulations with belly-worship (3:19). Furthermore, Paul quite harshly derogates his own Jewish past in the same context (3:4–9). This negative evaluation of central factors that make up Jewish identity has, together with a wealth of other similar NT texts, influenced the emergence of Christian anti-Judaism. This study participates in the “demystification” of these texts by explaining their historical origin as well as their role in early Christian identity construction.

In addition to touching on the complex and fluid relationship between early Christianity and Judaism, the study will also contribute to recent scholarly emphases on early Christianity as an inherently diverse movement with no fixed center or “orthodoxy”. The manuscript discoveries from Nag Hammadi, for example, have called for a reassessment of the variety of alignments in 2nd and 3rd century Christianity. Diversity and competition between different orientations has been detected even earlier, inside the New Testament canon. The current study will join and complement this general trend by demonstrating that Paul’s letters – the earliest written material pertaining to the emergent Christ-movement – already reveal an ongoing discussion and disagreement about the contents and limits of Christ-believing identity.

As for the outline of the study, the remainder of *Part 1* offers a brief introduction to previous study of Paul's opponents in general and in Philippians in particular. *Part 2: Methods and Context of the Letter*, discusses the various preliminary questions that need to be addressed before engaging in an in-depth analysis of the polemical passages. Chapter 2 introduces the methodological starting points and insights to be used in the analysis. Methodological guidelines concerning the textual world, such as advances in *mirror-reading* and understanding ancient polemical conventions are discussed, and the social psychological *social identity approach* is explained, with preliminary examples of how the approach will be applied to Philippians. The mutual relationship between the historical, social psychological and rhetorical viewpoints will be illustrated through Kari Syreeni's *Three-world model*, which combines sociology of knowledge and literary studies into a heuristic tool for observing the real world, the symbolic world, and the textual world.

Chapter 3 provides necessary historical background information for understanding the political and social realities of life as a Christ-believer and a Jew in the Roman Empire at the turn of the Common Era. The question is important inasmuch as Paul in Philippians opposes people, who offer for the Gentile Christ-believing Philippians an identity as (Christ-believing) Jews. The chapter also addresses the questions of the date, location, and unity of Philippians. It is argued that Philippians is Paul's last letter and written from captivity in either Caesarea or Rome. The letter is also judged to be originally of one piece. The historical situation of the Philippian church is discussed with special attention to Phil 1:27–30, where opposition to the Philippian Christ-believers by local Romans is referred to.

The next section of the study, *Part 3: Paul and the Jerusalem Community*, discusses the relationship between Paul and the Jerusalem-based Jewish Christ-believing community from the time of the so-called Antioch incident and the Jerusalem meeting, and through the Galatian crisis, to Paul's last visit in Jerusalem before his arrest and the writing of Phil. It is argued that Paul was continuously on problematic terms with the Jerusalem-based community, which makes it highly likely that they are the Jewish Christ-believing "opponents" referred to in Philippians as well.

Part 4: Analysis of Philippians opens in chapter 5 with discussion on the first section in Philippians which refers to opponents of some kind, 1:15–18a. Traditionally, Paul's more lenient sounding reaction has been taken as proof that he cannot have in view the same group of opponents as those he, later in Phil 3, calls "dogs" and "evil workers". This study, however, suggests that Paul is in fact in 1:15–18a talking about the same Jewish (Jerusalem-based)

Christ-believers as in Phil 3, and that his rhetorical aim at the beginning of the letter explains the more inclusive stance.

Chapter 6 discusses the beginning of Phil 3. The opponents referred to as “dogs”, “evil workers” and “mutilation” in Phil 3:2 are identified as Jewish Christ-believers who have an interest in circumcision of Gentile believers and who are most likely connected to the Jerusalem-based church with which Paul had a history of disagreement. The chapter discusses and illustrates the way Paul in 3:2–3:3 denigrates the opponents to heighten the status and strengthen the distinctiveness of the ingroup consisting of Philippian Gentile Christ-believers. Chapter 6 also discusses the biographical section Phil 3:4–11, where Paul emphasizes his own achievements in Judaism. Here Paul’s own identity in relation to the opponents and the addressees becomes of interest. It is argued that, in SIA terms, Paul establishes himself in the story as once a prototypical Jew (3:4–6), who made a conscious choice to reject this identity for Christ. This rejection is needed to portray Paul as having become a prototypical member and leader of the ingroup consisting of Gentile Christ-believers (3:7–11).

Chapter 7 investigates how the themes of participation in Christ (3:10–16) and eschatology (3:11–15, 20–21) function in the service of identity construction and maintenance. It is argued that the secondary and reactive role of righteousness in Paul’s argumentation is well visible in Phil 3, whereas Paul uses the theme of participation in Christ as a measure of *social creativity*, that is, as an identity descriptor and enhancer which does not arise directly from argumentation with the opponents. The role of suffering in this participatory experience (3:10) is understandable as a *costly signal* (or a hard-to-fake sign) of a person’s commitment to a group.

In chapter 7, Paul’s eschatological statements in Phil 3 are discussed, especially his puzzling eschatological reservation in 3:11–12 and the more traditional futuristic eschatology of 3:20–21. It is suggested that Paul is not in Phil 3:11–15 battling a faulty, realized eschatology either by the Philippians or the opponents. Rather, the eschatological reservation functions to motivate and increase the cohesiveness of the ingroup. Phil 3:20–21, on the other hand, is explained in terms of the concept of *social time* as Paul’s straight forward social competition with the outgroup for the one indivisible future salvation. Furthermore, the lack of argumentation concerning Jewish history and ancestry, such as hold a prominent place in Gal and Rom, is explained as the general mode of Paul’s message to fully Gentile audiences as well as a reflection of the ignorance concerning Jewish history of Philippian the Gentile audience.

Chapter 8 deals with the opponents mentioned at the end of Phil 3 and castigated as “belly worshippers” and “enemies of the cross of Christ”. Traditionally, scholarship has been divided as to whether Paul here means

Gentile representatives of the Roman society or the same Jewish Christ-believing opponents mentioned already before. The present study argues that the text most likely denotes the same Jewish Christ-believing outgroup as in 1:15–18a and 3:2ff., although it remains possible that Gentile representatives of the Roman society are also in view or, more likely, (Philippian) Christ-believers who accommodate too readily to the society.

Finally, *Part 5: Conclusions* summarizes the findings of the investigation and discusses their effect on understanding Paul and the earliest Christ-believing church in general.

2 Introduction to Previous Study

The father of modern historical critical research on Paul's opponents is without doubt Ferdinand Christian Baur (1792–1860), the central figure of the Tübingen School in the mid-19th century. Baur was “the first to make opponents central for understanding the occasion of Paul's letters”.³ His views on opposition to Paul and the situation of the early church were initially published in a long article *Die Christuspartei in der korinthischen Gemenide, der Gegensatz des petrinischen und paulinischen Christentums in der ältesten Kriche, der Apostel Petrus in Rom* (1831). The most complete exposition of his views is offered in *Paulus, der Apostel Jesu Christi, seine Leben und Wirken, seine Briefe und seine Lehre* (1845).⁴ Baur's was a “single-front theory” of the opponents: he suggested that Paul's adversaries in all his letters were Jewish Christian “Judaizers” with a connection to the Jerusalem church.⁵ As a follower of the Hegelian philosophy of history,⁶ Baur believed that the earliest church was divided into two opposing parties (corresponding to the *thesis* and *antithesis* of Hegelian dialects), the Pauline Gentile church and the Petrine Jewish Christian church. The Petrine side held that continued observance of the Mosaic Law, including circumcision, was still necessary for the Christ-believers.⁷ The parties were essentially

3 Sumney 1990, 15.

4 English translation by E. Zeller in 1876. According to Harris (1975, 195) the latter one marks the conclusion and the final form of Baur's fifteen years of work on the topic.

5 Baur 1831, 165–166. In fact, Harris (1975, 184) suggests that Baur was so keen on detecting opposition between Paul and the Judaizers that “where no evidence of such a struggle was to be seen in the writings of the early Church, the conclusion was to be drawn that such writings dated from a later period”.

6 See Harris 1975, 163–167 for an overview of the influence of Hegelian philosophy on Baur.

7 Baur 1876, 251–253.

separated at the Jerusalem meeting and continued to oppose each other, until both were absorbed into the emerging Catholic Church.⁸

Despite being historically influential,⁹ Baur's overall view and his method of investigation have later attracted much criticism. He has been denounced for letting a presupposed philosophy of history govern his interpretation.¹⁰ He has also been accused of allowing a preformulated reconstruction of the early church determine his analysis of the sources.¹¹ Furthermore, he has been criticized for relying too much on very late source material, such as the Pseudo-Clementine Homilies from the 2nd century.¹² J. B. Lightfoot (1828–1889) stands out as Baur's first and main contemporary critic in the Anglo-Saxon world.¹³

After Baur's time, other general theories about the conflicts in the early church were formed. Wilhelm Lütgert (*Freiheitspredigt und Schwarmgeister in Korinth: Ein Beitrag zur charakteristik der Christuspartei*, 1908) found Paul to be refuting both Judaistic opponents as well as pneumatic enthusiasts¹⁴ in all his letters and proposed a "double battlefront" theory of Paul's opponents. Lütgert in turn greatly influenced Walter Schmithals, whose view of Paul's opponents as Gnosticizing Jewish Christians was popular in the 1950–60s and beyond (e.g. *Paulus und die Gnostiker*, 1965).¹⁵ Schmithals differed from Lütgert in two major respects. Firstly, while Lütgert saw the origins of the pneumatic heresy in local Pauline churches as a form of "decay of Paulinism in the Hellenistic environment", Schmithals considered the Gnosticizing opponents as part of an organized missionary movement.¹⁶ Furthermore, Schmithals criticized Lütgert for not being successful, unlike himself, in "entirely replacing the old thesis of the Judaizers" with the new view of pneumatic, Gnosticizing enthusiasts.¹⁷ Schmithals saw "a (more or less Jewish Christian) Gnosticism" everywhere

8 Baur 1876, 39–41, 125; Harris 1975, 182; Lüdemann 1989, 6.

9 See Lüdemann 1989, 11 and Sumney 2005, 8–9.

10 Sumney 2005, 8. Lüdemann (1989, 6–8) defends Baur's exegetical work against these accusations (for examples of accusations p. 6 n. 54), but admits that the Hegelian framework did prevent Baur from seeing the variety of second century Christianity at the time of the formation of the early Catholic church.

11 Sumney (1990, 21–22) states that it was Baur's dependence on a presumed historical reconstruction that allowed him to find just a single front of opponents.

12 Lüdemann 1989, 2; Sumney 1990, 16–17.

13 See Lüdemann 1989, 10 n. 77.

14 Lütgert uses terms such as "Schwarmgeister" and "Enthusiasten". See Schmithals 1972, 65–66 for a list of Lütgert's work.

15 English translation by John E. Steely, 1972.

16 Schmithals 1972, 66.

17 Schmithals 1972, 66.

(with the exception of the letter to the Romans).¹⁸ In fact, Schmithals commended Baur for his methodological consistency in finding only a single front of opponents, something which even many of Baur's later sympathizers have found difficult to accept.¹⁹ Indeed, Schmithals' methodological starting point was that the question of the opponents' identity is "correctly approached methodologically only when one investigates the whole body of epistolary literature coming into question or in the investigation of parts keeps in view the whole".²⁰ Further, he stated of Paul's opponents that "for their rival mission a multiformity is not from the outset likely. Therefore, one should call in question the theological uniformity of these opponents only if the sources require it".²¹

Already in Schmithals' time, however, it became common to view Baur's (as well as Schmithals') methodological starting point as too simplistic. Various opponents with different backgrounds – outside or inside the community – were found in different letters by Helmut Koester (1962) and Robert Jewett (1970), to name a few. Koester viewed the "heresies" in Paul's time as "nothing but various and often *ad hoc* attempts, arising within the Christian movement, to solve the unavoidable internal problems of a syncretistic group (Early Christianity!), which emerged in the Hellenistic-Roman world".²²

Recent advancements in the study of Gnosticism have led to serious problematization of Schmithals' view of Gnostics in the early church.²³ Some, however, still emphasize the "pneumatic" nature of the opponents (e.g. Ralph P. Martin 1980 and John Reumann 2008 for Philippians). Baur, on the other hand, has had a more significant following. His overall position is adopted, with modifications, most prominently by Gerd Lüdemann (*Paulus, der Heidenapostel, vol 2: Antipaulinismus im frühen Christentum*, 1983)²⁴ and Michael Goulder (*St. Paul versus St. Peter: A Tale of Two Missions*, 1994, and *Paul and the Competing Mission in Corinth*, 2011). Goulder's view is essentially the same as Baur's. He sees disagreements between Pauline and Petrine Christianity behind almost all the theological issues taken up by Paul in his letters. Gerd Lüdemann is also heavily indebted to Baur, even though he disagrees

18 Schmithals 1972, 67.

19 Schmithals 1972, 239 on Baur.

20 Schmithals 1972, 242.

21 Schmithals 1972, 245.

22 Koester 1962, 332.

23 See Hakola, Nikki, and Tervahauta (2013, 16–19) and ch. 7 for problems with the category of Gnosticism.

24 English translation by E. Boring in 1989.

with some of Baur's methodology²⁵ and conclusions. While Lüdemann finds signs of connections to Jerusalem with all Paul's opponents in the NT, the overall picture is more nuanced. He posits a difference between Peter and James in their level of hostility towards Paul, as well as more detailed historical developments behind the escalation of the animosities.²⁶ Furthermore, Lüdemann does not restrict his views to a single front theory of opponents but considers the opponents in 2 Corinthians a third party, albeit with connections to Jerusalem as well.²⁷

As already noted, scholarship has from early on criticized the tendency of both Baur and Schmithals to fit the evidence from various letters to a preexisting reconstruction of the early church.²⁸ It has become more common to investigate and proceed from each given text separately.²⁹ This is, of course, a methodologically sound starting point. The primary source should always be just that: "The place to start, whether to prove or disprove a theory, is with individual cases."³⁰ However, extreme cautiousness in this regard has occasionally led to very anemic descriptions of the opponents. Philippians, for example, has sometimes been read without any attempt to link it to what is known of Paul's opponents and life from elsewhere, and the stance of the opponents is simply given a brief description on the basis of what can be extracted from the text alone. This cautiousness has probably resulted from the fact that the letter bears no direct mentions of e.g. apostles such as Peter or James. In my opinion, however, it is both interesting and legitimate to attempt to place particular texts in the field of other Paul's letters and the course of Paul's life as well as to the general network of early Christianity. After all, the Christ-believers cannot yet have been significant in number. This makes it quite believable that the

25 Like others (see above) Lüdemann (1989, 30–32) criticizes Baur above all for two things: 1) Baur's way of identifying Jewish Christianity with anti-Paulinism in order to explain the birth of the Catholic Church in a Hegelian way and 2) Baur's reliance on significantly late source material.

26 Lüdemann believes that between Paul's first and second visits to Jerusalem the more conciliatory Peter was replaced by the stringent James as the leader of the Jerusalem community (1989, 45). Later, during Paul's last visit to Jerusalem, the community "stood completely within Judaism and tolerated no abrogation of the law" (1989, 61).

27 Lüdemann (1989, 94–97) argues that 2 Corinthians testifies to a connection between the "super-apostles" to Jerusalem. However, since the Jerusalem church itself was, in Lüdemann's view, divided over the question of circumcision and Law observance for Gentiles, "the absence of circumcision as a point of dispute is no argument against the origin of the external Corinthian anti-Paulinists from Jerusalem".

28 Sumney 2005, 51.

29 Sumney 2005, 48–49.

30 Sumney 1990, 35.

existing ones were more or less connected. That having been said, the textual evidence from the primary sources should be considered the foundation and key to everything else and, indeed, a condition *sine qua non*.

In addition to these more traditionally exegetical questions, research on Paul's opponents has recently also had to adapt to a larger trend in historical, literary, and social studies, which problematizes the relationship between reality and its representations. The background for this development is in the so-called linguistic turn, which suggested that language does not so much reflect reality as actively construct it.³¹ In this vein, it has been admitted that mirror-reading Paul's letters and ancient (polemical) rhetoric in general is more challenging than previously thought. It is emphasized that what Paul says of the opponents cannot be taken at face value and read as an accurate description of the opponents. On the contrary, Paul's images of the opponents are stereotypical and distorted and mainly intended for the construction and solidification of the identity of his ingroup.³² The polemical rhetoric Paul applies is often also very conventional, which further reduces the informative content of his words.

Insights from ancient polemical rhetoric (and rhetoric in general) to Paul's letters are offered by scholars such as Luke Timothy Johnson (*The New Testament's Anti-Jewish Slander and the Conventions of Ancient Polemic*, 1989) and Lauri Thurén (monograph *Derhetorizing Paul: A Dynamic Perspective on Pauline Theology and the Law*, 2000, as well as several articles, e.g., *The Antagonists: Rhetorically Marginalized Identities in the New Testament*, 2008). The problem of mirror-reading Paul's polemical material has been discussed in a seminal article by John M. G. Barclay (*Mirror-reading a Polemical Letter: Galatians as a Test Case*, 1987). A pioneering attempt to systematize which parts and which type of statements in Paul's letters are more likely to contain actual information about the opponents is offered by Jerry L. Sumney (esp. *Identifying Paul's Opponents: The Question of Method in 2. Corinthians*, 1990). These insights into rhetoric and mirror-reading are discussed at length in ch. 2 of this study.

Another important recent trend in the study of Paul's opponents has to do with the application of social psychological theories, which seek to understand and explain discriminative human (group) behavior and the emergence and use of stereotypes. Regarding the question of Paul's opponents, the theories

31 Spiegel 2005, 25. See also Hakola, Nikki, and Tervahauta 2013, 10–12.

32 "... portraits of others are increasingly seen as literary, rhetorical, and ideological constructs that helped shape and maintain particular early Christian identities" (Hakola, Nikki, and Tervahauta 2013, 13).

explain the social and psychological motivations behind the use of polemical rhetoric. The present study also takes part in the effort to understand the social and psychological factors that lie behind the general human tendency to form groups that compete with each other and oppose each other. By applying the *social identity approach* (SIA) to Philippians, it will be demonstrated how these tendencies are reflected in a particular text by Paul. SIA has been applied to Paul's letters most prominently by Philip Esler (*Galatians*, 1998; *Identity and Conflict in Romans: The Social Setting of Paul's Letter*, 2003) and J. Brian Tucker (*You Belong to Christ: Paul and the Formation of Social Identity in 1 Corinthians 1–4*, 2010; *Remain in Your Calling: Paul and the Continuation of Social Identities in 1 Corinthians*, 2011). For a more detailed account of these works and the use of SIA in this study, see ch. 2.

Understanding the inaccurate and unfair representation of “others” in early Christian sources has also led to important research ethical advances. Since the ground-breaking work of Walter Bauer (*Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*, 1934), it has been increasingly emphasized that early Christianity was multiform from the very beginning and that value-laden and biased terms such as heresy/heretical do not describe objective reality. It is commonly accepted that historians should do justice to early Christian diversity,³³ and that Paul's opponents and any other “heretics” in the history of early Christianity should be viewed with similar respect as Paul himself. Already F. C. Baur noted in a surprisingly modern voice that “opposition [to Paul] does not warrant us to regard [the opponents] as mere heretics, impostors, and corrupters”, and that “we have no reason for assuming that these opponents of the Apostle were not thoroughly in earnest in the views and principles of which they were champions”.³⁴ The study of Paul's opponents is very valuable from this point of view, since it gives a voice to some of the very earliest “others” in church history.³⁵

The study of Paul's opponents in Philippians has followed the general trends depicted above. Interestingly, Baur considered Philippians pseudepigraphical – an almost unheard-of position in recent scholarship.³⁶ As for Schmithals,

33 For this principle of *fair play*, see Räisänen 2010, 10.

34 Baur 1876, 252.

35 Bauer (1972, xxi) calls for the judicial principle of *audiatur et altera pars*.

36 Baur's (1875, 45–72) arguments include the notion that Philippians employs “Gnostic ideas and arguments” (45–53) and is weaker in thought and presentation (“want of any profound and masterly connexion of ideas”) than Paul's genuine epistles (53–58). Furthermore, Baur (1875, 58–59) finds it incredible that, had Paul actually managed to secure converts in Caesar's household (Phil 1:12), we do not hear of it in anywhere else in early Christian material. According to Bruce (2011, 9–11) “none of Baur's arguments about

he detected Gnostic Jewish Christians in Phil just as he did elsewhere.³⁷ Since then, solutions have become more variegated just as with the study of Paul's opponents in other letters.

The main passages in Phil that deal with opposition of some sort are 1:15–18a; 1:27–30; 3:2–11 and 3:18–19. Previous research has strongly concentrated on the problematic Phil 3. The harshness of its tone has led many to suggest that it belongs to an originally separate letter fragment. In addition to the question concerning the identity of the opponents in Phil 3,³⁸ there has been considerable disagreement as to whether the same opponents should be identified at the beginning (3:2–11) and at the end of the chapter (3:18–21). Most agree that 3:2ff deal with opposition of Jewish and nomistic nature. As for the utterances in 3:18ff – such as “their belly is their god” and “their glory is in their shame” – many consider that a libertine stance is being refuted.³⁹ For many, then, these two cannot describe the same group. Lütgert, for example, considered Phil 3 the best textual representative of Paul's battle on two fronts, the Jewish Christian and pneumatic-libertine.⁴⁰ Others, however, have opted for a less literal understanding of the invectives in 3:18ff and claim that they ultimately address the same problem as 3:2ff. Regarding the “nomistic problem” in 3:2ff, it has also been discussed whether the “dogs”, “evil workers”, and “mutilation” refer to non-Christ-believing Jews or Jewish Christ-believers. After all, Paul does not clearly indicate that these people share some kind of belief in Christ.

A further problem has been posed by the enigmatic statements concerning “perfection” in the middle of Phil 3. The verses have proven difficult to explain in the context of the oppositional texts. Paul's refutation of having reached perfection (3:12–13) has often been taken as a sign that the opponents, or the Philippians themselves, thought in terms of some form of realized eschatology. In general, it has proven very difficult to account for all the material in Phil 3, since it seems to point in quite different directions.

Philippians has commended itself to later generations of Pauline scholarship”. Today, only the representatives of the (Dutch) Radical Criticism, such as Hermann Detering, hold that Philippians is pseudepigraphical.

37 Schmithals 1972, 65–122.

38 Reumann (2008, 469–470) lists suggestions including the following: Gnostics, agitators for a Jewish dualistic wisdom concept, Torah legalists, God-fearers in Philippi seeking to return to the shelter of the synagogue in the face of persecution, newly converted proselytes, fictitious and hypothetical opposition etc.

39 For an extensive list of pre-1970 researches with this view, see Jewett 1970, 363 n. 1.

40 See Schmithals 1972, 82.

The passages 1:15–18a and 1:27–30 have also generated their own problems. The latter one has seemed much clearer and it is considered almost unanimously to deal with local Philippian opposition (probably from civic authorities or local populace). The passage 1:15–18a, however, has raised more questions. The text has been considered problematic, because Paul’s relation to the opponents mentioned therein is ambiguous. On the one hand, Paul calls these opponents “brothers” who “preach Christ” and can even say he rejoices in their work (1:18a). On the other hand, he reproaches them fiercely for doing their work from false motives, such as “envy and strife” and even from the ulterior motive of causing Paul “suffering” in prison. Despite this, Paul’s more moderate stance towards the opponents in the passage is usually considered as proof that he cannot be referring to the same persons of Jewish background as in the beginning of Phil 3.

From the standpoint of historically oriented exegesis, opinions about the opponents in Philippians have been very much affected by disagreements concerning the date, the location, and the original unity of the letter, along with the fact that Paul refers to opposition in so many different places in the letter. This wealth of variables has led to a wide variety of historical reconstructions. Until recently, it has been common to regard the letter as composed of two or three originally separate fragments. In this scenario the various references to opponents can spring from different historical situations. For a representation of different solutions concerning the structure, setting and the identity of opponents in Philippians, see table 1. (The question of unity will be discussed more specifically in ch. 3).

TABLE 1^a

	Opp. in 1:15–1:18a	Opp. in 3:2–11	Opp. in 3:18–19	Integrity of the letter	Place of writing
Weiss (1859)	bad Christian workers	verse 3:2 refers to all three different groups in Phil (“dogs” = Gentiles, “bad workers” = Christians, “mutilation” = Jews)	unclean Gentiles	one letter	Rome
Lightfoot (1900)	the Judaizing party, whose object is to gain adherents to the Law	Pharisaic Judaizers	antinomian reactionists	one letter	Rome

TABLE 1 (cont.)

	Opp. in 1:15–1:18a	Opp. in 3:2–11	Opp. in 3:18–19	Integrity of the letter	Place of writing
Lohmeyer (1954 1st ed. 1928)	Jewish Christians whom Paul had battled through- out his career	Jews	<i>lapsi</i> , former members of the Philippian church	one letter	Caesarea
Beare (1959)	Christians of the city, who feel that the renown of the great Apostle has put them in the shade	Jews (or Jewish Christians)	the danger of anti- nomianism	composite letter A (4:10–20), B (1:1–3:1, 4:2–9, 21–23) and C (3:2–4:1)	Rome
Koester (1962)	–	Jewish Christian mis- sionaries combining Gnosticism with a perfectionist doctrine of the law and a radi- calized eschatology	same as 3:2–11	composite letter A (4:10–20), B (1:1– 2:30/3:1) and C (3:1/2–4:1) (4:2–9, 21–23 uncertain)	–
Klijn (1965)	–	Jews	Jews	3:2–4:3 is a separate letter or part of a separate letter	–
Jewett (1970)	<i>Divine man</i> mis- sionaries who believed the humility and suffering of Paul's imprisonment were incompatible with the life of an apostle	Judaizers	former members of the Philippian church, hereti- cal libertinists with gnostic tendencies	one letter	Ephesus

TABLE 1 (cont.)

	Opp. in 1:15–1:18a	Opp. in 3:2–11	Opp. in 3:18–19	Integrity of the letter	Place of writing
Schmithals – (1972)		Gnostic missionaries of Jewish Christian background with lib- ertinistic tendencies	same as 3:2–11	composite letter A (4:10–20, 23), B (1:1–3:1; 4:4–7), C (3:2–4:3, 4:8–9)	Ephesus
Martin (1980)	Christian preach- ers who believe Paul has placed the Christian message in doubt by his weakness, “divine-men”	Judaizing or (more likely) Jewish Gnosticizing enemies	Gnosticizing Christians	undecided	unde- cided
Hawthorne (1983)	people who op- posed Paul out of personal animos- ity and rivalry	Jews from Thessalonica	Jews	one letter	Caesarea
Lüdemann (1989)	Christ-proclaimers in the location where Paul is im- prisoned ... hardly the same kind as in Gal	Jewish Christians insisting on the reli- gious significance of circumcision	general warn- ing uncon- nected to 3:2–11	–	–
Bruce (1989)	some envious of Paul’s achieve- ment in carry- ing the message through in so many provinces	Judaizers who visited Gentile churches, insisted that circum- cision was necessary for justification and sought to bring Paul’s Gentile converts under the control of the mother church in Jerusalem	Christians who deliber- ately engage in sin (glut- tony, sexual promiscuity), libertines	one letter	Rome

TABLE 1 (cont.)

	Opp. in 1:15–1:18a	Opp. in 3:2–11	Opp. in 3:18–19	Integrity of the letter	Place of writing
Perkins (1991)	intra-Christian tensions con- nected with Paul's imprisonment	Judaizing Christian missionaries	some who held out status as members of Jewish community	composite letter A 4:10–20, B 1:1–3:1, 4:2–7, (8–9), C 3:2–4:1, 8–9	Ephesus
Becker (1993)	–	Judaizers	same Judaizers as in 3:2	composite letter A (1:1–3:1; 4:1–7, 10–23) and B (3:2–21; 4:8–9)	A: Ephesus, B: on the way to Mace- donia
Fee (1995)	Jewish Christian element in the church of Rome	Judaizers	thoroughly ambiguous	one letter	Rome
Bockmuehl (1998)	Roman competi- tors of Paul, could reflect a harden- ing of the polarity of the so-called strong and weak missionaries	Judaizing opponents	moral noncha- lance of more “avant-garde” interpreters of Paul	one letter	Rome
Osiek (2000)	whose strategy or way of operating was not in agree- ment with that of Paul	Christian mission- aries or preachers, whether Jew or Gentile, who preach circumcision and Law observance for Gentile Christians	same as in 3:2	one letter	Ephesus
Hooker (2002)	personal rivalry rather than doctri- nal opposition	Judaizers	different group from “the dogs” in 3:2	–	–

TABLE 1 (cont.)

	Opp. in 1:15–1:18a	Opp. in 3:2–11	Opp. in 3:18–19	Integrity of the letter	Place of writing
Schnelle (2005)	rival missionary factions	Jewish Christian missionaries insisting that Gentile converts be circumcised	–	one letter	Rome
Reumann (2008)	Ephesian Christians, who resent Paul for appealing to his citizenship in the trial	Jewish-Christian missionary group stressing circumcision (and therefore the Law), who stressed resur- rection as a present experience (perhaps through baptism)	outsiders and Philippians who saw circumcision and Law as the way to “transformed existence” > erroneous es- chatology and libertinism	composite letter A (4:10– 20), B (1:1–3:1, likely parts of 4:1–9, 4:21–23), C (3:2–21, perhaps parts of 4:1–9)	Ephesus
Dunn (2009)	local more tra- ditional Jewish believers and their Gentile supporters, who became hostile to the law-free version of the gospel (reflected in Rom 14:1–15:7)	a group of Christian Jews who argued that the status of the uncircumcised Gentile believers was defective	same as 3:2	one letter	Rome
Wither- ington (2011)	Gentile Christians in Rome who found Paul's cor- rection in Rom onerous	Jewish Christians whose agenda was to make Gentile believ- ers Judaize	same as 3:2	one letter	Rome

TABLE 1 (cont.)

	Opp. in 1:15–1:18a	Opp. in 3:2–11	Opp. in 3:18–19	Integrity of the letter	Place of writing
Betz (2015)	fellow Christians indulging in criticism, not to be confused with those Paul attacks in 3:2–21	parallel of the situation in Galatians	other Christian communities with different ways of life, unspecified	composite letter, 3:1b–21 and 4:10 separate attachments sent with Epaphroditus	Rome
Holloway (2017)	local Christ-believers to whom Paul was a controversial figure for theological (Jewish law) reasons	consistent with opponents in Gal and 2 Cor	same as 3:2	one letter	Rome

a The summary descriptions largely follow the original wordings of the scholars.

This study will address all the traditional questions mentioned above from the standpoint of recent methodological advances in the study of Paul’s letters. In addition to this, Paul’s treatment of his opponents will be investigated in the light of the social psychological *social identity approach* (SIA) to gain a deeper insight into the identity-negotiating aspects of Paul’s aggressive discourse. Furthermore, the study aims to provide a wide historical context for Paul’s relationship with his opponents by reconstructing Paul’s position in the Christ-believing communities from the time of the Jerusalem meeting and the Antioch incident until the writing of Phil, Paul’s last letter.

Current research relevant to the topic of the present study naturally includes the study of Paul’s opponents in his other letters, as well as the applications of rhetorical insights and SIA to Pauline material in general. These were introduced above. As for material, which discusses Philippians directly, commentaries hold a prominent place. These discuss the opponents, but usually cannot venture very deeply into the topic for practical limitations. More recent commentators on Philippians, such as Gordon D. Fee (1995), Marcus

Bockmuehl (1998), Carolyn Osiek (2000), John Reumann (2008) and especially Ben Witherington III (2011) and Paul A. Holloway (2017), are generally very aware of the previous shortcomings in mirror-reading Paul's letters. They also consider the rhetorical and epistological formulations in Paul's letters and recognize the conventions of ancient polemic. This study will naturally draw and reflect on such well-informed works.

Secondly, there are studies that focus on Philippians from a different angle, but also comment on the opponents in the process. Not surprisingly, Paul's references to opponents are often regarded as subsidiary to the major topic of the letter or as further illustrations of this other pivotal message. L. Gregory Bloomquist (1993), for example, offers a detailed epistological and rhetorical analysis of Phil with a view to discovering how the theme of suffering functions in the discourse. He argues that Paul presents the suffering and vindicated Christ as legitimation for the suffering of the Philippian addressees and as a "type" to be emulated. Bloomquist does not place much interest in the exact identity of the opponents in the letter but claims that their importance lies in their rhetorical function as opposites to this Christ type.⁴¹

Davorin Peterlin (1995), on the other hand, sees internal disunity in the Philippian church and disagreements between Paul and the Philippians as the main theme of the letter. References to outside opponents are, in his reading, entirely secondary. In discussing Phil 3, Peterlin in fact states that "the precise identification of the opponents ... is not crucial for the proper understanding of the role of chapter 3 within Phil as a whole, and of the situation of the church".⁴²

Peter Oakes (2001) seeks to understand the letter in the light of an extensive socio-historical investigation of the city of Philippi and its inhabitants. He sees the letter mainly as Paul's attempt to counter a threat of fragmentation in the church caused by (economic) suffering.⁴³ According to Oakes, Paul portrays Christ in the manner of the Emperor (2:9–11; 3:20–21) in order to "make his imperatives of unity supersede imperatives of the Philippian social order which would tend to break an economically suffering church apart".⁴⁴ Oakes reads

41 Bloomquist 1993, 196.

42 Peterlin 1995, 78.

43 Oakes seems in many ways to agree with Bloomquist on the centrality of the theme of suffering as well as Christ's and Paul's role as models for the Philippians in this respect (see Oakes 2001, 77–79, 103).

44 Oakes 2001, xiv.

Phil 3:2ff, too, in the light of Paul's example to the suffering Philippians, but admits that the "dogs" mentioned in the passage also pose a concrete threat.⁴⁵

Joseph Hellerman (2005), on the other hand, sees the letter chiefly as Paul's effort to subvert the traditional Roman views of honor among the Philippians by emphasizing Christ's humbleness particularly in the Christ-hymn (2:6–11). Hellerman reads even in 3:2ff a correction to the Roman emphasis on honor,⁴⁶ but, interestingly, does not discuss the opponents in 3:18–19, which is often understood as a direct reference to representatives of the Gentile Roman culture.

These, and similar, works will be applied and discussed at relevant junctures of the study, along with works, albeit for the most part not very recent ones, that more directly address the question of opponents in Philippians (e.g. the articles by Koester 1962, Klijn 1965, Jewett 1970, Perkins 1991, and Hooker 2002). The present study aims to bring the opponents in Philippians to the forefront again and to update the research with fresh application of new methodological insights.

45 Oakes 2001, 111: "It is just about possible that the 'dogs' (3.2) and the 'enemies of the cross of Christ' (3.18) are simply there as negative examples. However, the intensity of the rhetoric does make it seem that, whoever these groups (or this group) are, they actually pose some radical threat to Philippian Christians."

46 Hellerman 2005, 127. Although, like Oakes, he does not deny the reference to an actual threat as well (122).

PART 2

Methods and Context of the Letter



Methodology

1 A Methodology for Three Worlds: The Real World, the Symbolic World, and the Text World

The task of this study is to examine the polemical passages in Philippians from the three interrelated viewpoints of history, identity construction, and rhetoric. From a *historical point of view* the study seeks to identify the opponents and to clarify the socio-political, as well as Paul's personal, situation behind the letter. The element of *identity construction* in the text, on the other hand, has to do with how Paul portrays and differentiates the ingroup from the opponents, and how he represents his own identity in relation to the addressees and the opponents. Thirdly, the study necessarily takes into account the fact that the other two levels are manifested to us in the form of *polemical rhetoric*. Before a more detailed presentation of the methodological questions concerning each viewpoint, it is useful to illustrate how they relate to each other.

A helpful tool for this purpose is Kari Syreeni's Three-world model for biblical (and other) exegesis.¹ The model is a combination of the dualistic cosmologies of literary criticism and sociology of knowledge. From literary criticism it adopts the differentiation between the text-world and the real world, and from sociology of knowledge, a distinction between the real world and the so-called symbolic universe.² The result is a comprehensive approach which takes into account all three "worlds" pertaining to any text: the real world, the symbolic world, and the text world. The benefit of the model is not so much that it offers biblical scholarship something radically new. As Syreeni himself admits, "exegesis has always been about the literary, ideological, and historical nature of the documents."³ Whatever the primary goal of a given study, whether it is historical, ideological or literary, all three worlds need to be recognized and taken into account in order to arrive at balanced solutions.⁴ The model helps

1 Syreeni introduces the approach in a series of articles from the 1990s. See Syreeni 1990, 1994, 1999.

2 Literary criticism makes a "standard distinction between text-world and real life", while sociology of knowledge distinguishes between the two levels of material "real life" and its ideological superstructure, "the symbolic universe" (Syreeni 1990, 128 and 1994, 523).

3 Syreeni 1999, 39.

4 Merenlahti (1999, 148–149) notes that the traditional historical-critical methods have been "insensitive" to the aspects of textuality and narrativity, whereas modern "literary approaches"

to systematize the approach and to critically evaluate whether “current interpretive practices actually succeed in observing the paradigm that is *already* supposed to be in force”.⁵

The “real world” in Syreeni’s model stands for everyday life and concrete reality. In this study the real-world level is approached through historical inquiry into the particular events, actions, persons and views behind the text. The symbolic world in Syreeni’s model denotes a level of “ideology, values, ethos, thought schemes, fixed patterns of perception and behaviour”.⁶ Drawing on the sociology of knowledge, Syreeni gives this level many of the characteristics of the objective social realities and the “symbolic universes” as formulated by Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann in their classic work *The Social Construction of Reality* (orig. 1966).⁷ The symbolic world is very wide as it comprises any effort to conceptualize and interpret concrete reality, ranging from the automatic interpretative elements involved in human sensory perception⁸ to very conscious, conceptual and constructed ideological (e.g. theological) systems. While the real world is characterized by “the most obvious and least deniable objectivity”, the symbolic world stretches from less to more subjective levels.⁹ It is “not immediately observable as a separate entity” as it adheres

have often failed to recognize ideological aspects of the texts. According to him, investigation often accounts for only “two or less out of three relevant dimensions of the text”.

5 Merenlahti 1999, 148.

6 Syreeni 1999, 38.

7 In short, Berger and Luckmann view the construction of social reality in the following manner: everyday social interactions become institutionalized into abstract models of behavior through habitualization (1966, 70–71). When these institutions are passed on to a second generation they become objective social realities, into which individuals are gradually socialized (1966, 78, 85–89, 149 ff.). Symbolic universes are “bodies of theoretical tradition that integrate different provinces of meaning and encompass the institutional order in a symbolic totality” (1966, 113). They represent the highest level of legitimation of institutionalized processes into an “all-embracing frame of reference”, within which all human experience can be placed and explained (1966, 113–114). Berger and Luckmann’s view of the dialectical process of society as being created by man and as influencing him can be summarized in the processes of externalization, objectivation and internalization (Berger’s summary recap 1967, 3–4). In his *Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (1967) Berger builds on this overall view with the aim of explaining the role of religion in society. He sees religion as legitimating the “nomos” (the meaningful order, which the socially constructed world offers) by suggesting that it is cosmically rooted and eternal (1967, 25–27).

8 From this it could be argued that we actually have no access to the “real world” outside the symbolic universe (Syreeni 1990, 129). Consequently, I realize that the matters I take as belonging to the real world in this study are often much more symbolic than “real”. But since none of the three levels can exist separately – after all, the division is but a heuristic one – I take the liberty to provide my own definitions for practical purposes.

9 Syreeni 1990, 130.

both to the world of text and reality, and functions to unite, interpret and give meaning to both of them.¹⁰ In distinction to the textual world and the real world it is a non-linguistic, cognitive, emotional, social and behavioral level.¹¹

In this study, the interest in the symbolic level will not, for the most part, be focused on theology, but on a less constructed level of universal patterns pertaining to human group behavior. The viewpoint is social psychological and will be applied by the means of a particular approach, the so-called *social identity approach* (to be elaborated below). The approach will help to explain Paul's response to the historical situation in terms of social and psychological behaviors.¹² It answers questions such as: How does Paul demarcate between the ingroup and the outgroup(s) (the opponents)? What is the status position of the groups in relation to each other? What actions does Paul take to enhance the self-esteem of the ingroup in relation to the outgroup? What does Paul do to secure his position as the ingroup leader?

The third level is the level of the text, which in this study is represented (primarily) by the letter to the Philippians. In practice, the entry into the other two worlds is through this text, which means that the overall effort will by necessity be somewhat circular. Some of the historical questions can be reached through other sources as well, but these, too, are almost exclusively textual. Consequently, while ch. 4 of this study serves to illustrate the "historical situation" before the writing of Philippians, these results, too, are reached through a similar process of pursuing the historical level behind a text, in this case that of Galatians (and to a lesser degree Acts). While in ch. 4 the "real world" results will primarily be voiced, the analysis of the letter to the Philippians will give more attention to the symbolic world. As for the symbolic level, extra-textual insight is gained from assuming certain recurring patterns in human behavior, which can be tested against the text. The text, however, still must serve as the starting (and testing) point.¹³ Paul's letters are argumentative in nature, which means that the symbolic/ideological world is more visible than in narrative texts. But as Syreeni points out, rhetorical and epistolographical conventions

10 Syreeni 1999, 38.

11 Syreeni 1999, 38.

12 This is compatible with Elliott's (1993, 7) view of one of the main tasks of social scientific biblical criticism as investigating "the manner in which [the] textual communication was both a reflection of and a response to a specific social and cultural context".

13 "Abductive reasoning" like this is very common in historical research. Abduction (introduced by Charles S. Peirce first as "guessing") differs from deduction and induction in that it entails a back-and-forth movement of checking between the data and the hypothesis in order to find the most plausible solution to a problem (Elliott 1993, 48; Dvorak 2007, 262–263).

still “lend the text a literary character that does not permit immediate access to the writer’s thought world”.¹⁴ It is thus necessary to detect and to be aware of these conventions when attempting to enter the historical and symbolic levels behind the text.

2 Mirror-Reading through Rhetorical Conventions and Polemics

The method for reconstructing historical details behind a text is often called *mirror-reading*. For reconstructing Paul’s opponents this means, according to John M. G. Barclay, that “we must use the text which answers the opponents as a *mirror* in which we can see reflected the people and the arguments under attack”.¹⁵ Understandably, this is not an easy task. The analogy of a telephone-call (first used by Morna Hooker and elaborated by Barclay) is an illuminating one: what we hear in Paul’s letters is not just the other end of a telephone dialogue, but one that deals with a third (absent) party. Moreover, the letters are not designed to offer impartial information, but to refute the opponents. That is, the symbolic/ideological level in the text is highly subjective and needs to be recognized as such in order to access the objective level of the real world. An impartial historical reconstruction is further complicated by the lack of material by the opponents themselves or even by an objective outsider. While it has even been suggested that the whole approach is unworkable,¹⁶ this study will – essentially following Barclay – regard it both possible and necessary, although extremely demanding.¹⁷

In his article on Galatians (1987), Barclay offers some necessary guidelines for successful mirror-reading. In addition to being aware that Paul rarely talks to the opponents themselves, but rather to the recipients of the letter, it is also necessary never to “underestimate the distorting effects of polemic”.¹⁸ One of the most noteworthy features of polemical language is the so-called *polarization effect*, that is, the highlighting of differences at the cost of possible

14 Syreeni 1999, 38.

15 Barclay 1987, 73–74.

16 Lyons 1985, 96, 105–112.

17 Fee (1995, 7) also follows Barclay. The need for mirror-reading can also be illustrated through Vernon Robbins’ socio-rhetorical method. According to Robbins, the actual information (as well as the historical writer and receiver) are essentially outside the text. He believes “some kind of manifestation of [the information] stands inside a text, but not the information itself” (1995, 278–279).

18 Barclay 1987, 75.

agreements.¹⁹ This means that Paul will tend to depict the opponents as having little or nothing in common with himself while this, in reality, is not the case.

As the most prominent pitfalls, several of which also appear in previous scholarship on Philippians, Barclay points out the following four. 1. *Undue selectivity*. This denotes the fallacies in choosing passages that are most informative about the opponents. Barclay states that “we clearly need criteria by which we can judge which are the most revealing of Paul’s statements, while also taking seriously the need to provide an explanation for the entire letter.”²⁰ 2. *Over-interpretation*. This entails the inclination to imagine every Pauline statement as having to do with the opponents, as well as reading unduly emphatic antagonism by opponents behind each statement. The error is related to Barclay’s point 4. *latching onto particular words and phrases* and viewing them as the very vocabulary used by the opponents. The pitfall is amply visible in the 1960s scholarship that sought to find Gnosticizing libertine pneumatics behind all Paul’s polemical texts.²¹ Barclay’s point 3. *mishandling polemics* cautions against reading polemical texts too literally or taking sides in the debate.²² Both will lead to an unfair and unhistorical representation of the opponents.²³

In addition to promoting consciousness of these fallacies, Barclay’s proposes a methodology of seven criteria for successful mirror-reading. These are:

19 Barclay 1987, 75, 78.

20 Barclay 1987, 79. A classic example of undue selectivity (taken up by Barclay) is the way Schmithals reads Gal 3–4 as only conventional *topoi* in Paul’s debate with the Jews that do not reflect the situation in Galatia nor the attitude of the Galatian opponents (1972, 41: “none of these sections is conceived for the Galatian epistle”). With this assumption Schmithals makes room for the allegedly pneumatic libertine Gnostic opponents, whom he detects in Gal 5–6 (1972, 42, 46–55). Regarding Phil 3, Schmithals seems to take (the much vaguer, in my opinion) 3:7–16 as more informative than the references to circumcision and Law observance at the beginning of Phil 3 – where he criticizes Koester for putting too much emphasis (Schmithals 1972, 120). More recently, Nanos has made a similar move. In his interpretation of Galatians, Nanos differentiates between situation-related discourse, narrative material, and transitional material, which joins the two (2002, 62–72). According to Nanos, the situational material contains “the primary rhetorical information from which we may derive details of the exigence in Galatia”, while the narrative material can draw “from other experiences or stories to support the lines of argument taken up in the situational discourse” (2002, 62–63). Nanos is clearly tendentious in deeming as “narrative material” – with no connection to the situation of the addressees – any material that points to disagreement between Paul and Jerusalem (Gal 1:12–2:14) or that contains hostile statements concerning Judaism (4:22–30) (2002, 68). For other critique of Nanos’ methodology, see Sumney 2005, 46–47.

21 Barclay 1987, 79–80, 81–82.

22 Robbins (1996, 235) brings up a similar point when he discusses the workings of the ideology of the interpreter.

23 Barclay 1987, 80–81.

1. Distinguishing the type of utterance used and the range of possibilities that may lie behind it (Barclay distinguishes between *assertion*, *denial*, *command* and *prohibition*).
2. Taking into account the tone of the text.
3. Taking into account the frequency with which the subject matter is handled.
4. Avoiding mirror-reading of passages whose meaning is unclear.
5. Taking unfamiliar motifs as possible reflection of topics brought on by opponents.
6. Assuming consistency of arguments and not more than one group of opponents if not necessary.
7. Accepting only historically plausible results.²⁴

In terms of the Three-world model (unknown to Barclay), Barclay provides necessary observations and guidelines for taking seriously both the symbolic/ideological world and text-world. It accepts that the text is not a (flawless) mirror of the real world, but has a character of its own, which needs to be recognized before moving on to other levels. The same can be said of the symbolic/ideological level.

Jerry L. Sumney has offered an even more thorough methodology especially related to Barclay's first two points. In his analysis of Paul's opponents in 2 Corinthians (1990) he makes a systematic distinction between different types of passages in Paul's letters and the extent to which they can be assumed to yield information on the opponents. Sumney differentiates between *polemical*, *apologetic*, *didactic*, and *conventional* contexts and further distinguishes between *explicit statements*, *allusions*, and *affirmations* inside these. In addition to pure informativeness (how likely the passage is to refer to opponents), Sumney also evaluates passages with regard to their reliability (how fairly and accurately the information on the opponents is likely to be presented). He distinguishes five levels of *certainty of reference* and four levels of *reliability of reference*.²⁵

In this study neither Sumney's nor Barclay's criteria will be explicitly and systematically applied at each point of the analysis, but only voiced when particularly informing. Barclay's criterion 6, however, may already be picked up here, since it is of general importance to the overall argumentation. Barclay's point 6 on consistency reads as follows: "Unless we have strong evidence to

²⁴ Barclay 1987, 84–85.

²⁵ Sumney 1990, 96. For an overview of Sumney's method see 1990, 95–96; 112–113. Sumney restates the methodology and responds to some criticism in 1999, 13–32, and briefly recaps the main points in 2005, 47–48.

suggest that Paul is responding to more than one type of opponent or argument, we should assume that a single object is in view".²⁶ As was discussed above, one of the most visible and perplexing features of previous scholarship on Philippians is the assumption of several groups of opponents behind the singular text. The criterion will also be of importance when moving from our historical reconstruction of Paul's previous encounters with opponents to the situation reflected in Philippians.²⁷ This study takes consistency as a methodological starting point and assumes that the simplest solution is to be opted for unless there are notable reasons for doing otherwise.

The textual world of Paul's letters is imbued with ancient rhetorical and epistolographical conventions and commonplaces. Knowledge of these conventions is necessary in order to avoid the errors of both *undue selectivity* and *over-interpretation*. In selecting relevant material, understanding ancient speech and letter composition can to some extent help determine, which passages in the text are more likely to reveal engagement with opponents, and what kind. As for over-interpretation, detecting conventional features will help assess the informational value of a given text. In practice, this means that the more a statement reveals standard letter/speech formulations, the harder it is to uncover its correspondence to the "real world".

In the ancient world, speech and letter writing were systematized and sophisticated forms of communication. Aristotle distinguished three γένη of speeches: τὸ δικάζον, τὸ συμβουλευτικόν and τὸ ἐπιδεικτικόν (*genus iudiciale, genus deliberativum, genus demonstrativum*).²⁸ The judicial (or forensic) speech seeks to influence the audience's view on some controversial issue. The most classic case is a defense speech in a court of law. Deliberative rhetoric seeks to influence the audience's beliefs and future actions. Epideictic rhetoric, for its part, is the rhetoric of praise and blame which bases on existing agreement between the speaker and the audience about the nature of the situation.²⁹ Time wise, forensic rhetoric deals with issues that have happened in the past,

26 Barclay 1987, 85. This was one of the main points of Schmithal's criticism against the two-front theory of Lütgert (see e.g. 1972, 17: "So long as Paul himself does not explicitly indicate that he is engaged in a polemic against different groups, one must have serious reasons for the assertion of a double heresy ...").

27 To be sure, Sumney (1990, 77–86) warns against allowing previous reconstructions of the early church to determine the results in a given letter. However, he thinks it is an asset if an interpreter is able to connect the opponents emerging from a letter with otherwise known groups in the church. Despite the different order of presentation, this is exactly what the present study attempts to do.

28 Aristotle, *Rhet.* 1.3. Quintilian, however, criticizes this division as being too narrow (*Inst.* 3.4.1–4).

29 *Rhet. Her.* 1.2.2. Klauck 2006, 212–213.

epideictic with present situations and deliberative with choices that effect the future.³⁰

There is vast agreement in rhetorical handbooks on the structure of a good speech. With minor variations depending on the *genus* of the speech, five central parts are distinguished:

1. *Exordium* (introduction)
2. *Narratio* (facts about the case)
3. *Partitio/propositio* (laying out the essential propositions of the speaker and opponents)
4. *Probatio* (argumentation)
 - i. *Confirmatio* (defence of the speaker's stance)
 - ii. *Reprehensio* (refutation of the opposition's stance)
5. *Peroratio* (ending)³¹

The subject of the speech is first introduced in the *exordium*. Here the speaker will also generate goodwill and trust in the audience towards himself (*captatio benevolentiae*). The case history and facts are then presented in the *narratio*. The aim here is to be objective or at least to give the impression of objectivity. In the *partitio* the speaker offers a systematized overview of the subject and gives a preliminary summary of the following argumentation. The actual argumentation takes place in the *probatio* which includes both the defense of the speaker's own case (*confirmatio*) as well as a refutation of opposing views (*reprehensio*). The speech then ends in a *peroratio* where a summary of the above argumentation is offered, along with some final attempts of emotive influence on the listeners.³² In a simplified form the speech can be seen to run from 1. establishing the speaker's *ethos*, through 2. a presentation of the factual arguments (*logos*), to 3. a final emotional appeal (*pathos*).³³

As for the rhetorical genre, those who discuss it consider Philippians to be deliberative in nature.³⁴ Margaret M. Mitchell distinguishes four common features of deliberative rhetoric, all of which are present in Philippians:³⁵

1. A focus on the future time as the subject of deliberation (Phil 1:10, 28; 2:1 etc.)

30 Aristotle, *Rhet.* 1.3. Mitchell 1991, 24 n. 41.

31 Quintilian, *Inst.* 3.9.1. Witherington 1994, 13; Klauck 2006, 218–219.

32 See Cicero, *Inv.* 1.7; Quintilian, *Inst.* 3.3.

33 Witherington 1994, 12–13.

34 Bloomquist 1994, 119–121; Witherington 1994, 16–17; 2011, 25 (“a deliberative speech with some epideictic features”); Williams 2002, 99.

35 Mitchell 1991, 23. Examples and further elaboration of features in Philippians by Williams 2002, 99–105.

2. Employment of a determined set of appeals or ends, the most distinctive of which is the advantageous (τὸ συμφέρον) (Phil 2:12–13, 3:1)
3. Proof by example (παράδειγμα) (Phil 1:12–26, 3:5–14)³⁶
4. Appropriate subjects for deliberation, of which factionalism and concord are especially common (Phil 1:27–30)

This means that the letter was mainly designed to advice and dissuade the audience – in contrast to being e.g. defensive apology on Paul's part (cf. Betz's 1979 suggestion of Galatians as judicial rhetoric). As Ben Witherington puts it, the letter is "a progress-oriented not a problem-solving discourse".³⁷

As for determining a speech structure in Philippians, the case is more ambiguous. There is no scholarly consensus on defining the limits of different parts of speech in the letter (see below for examples). In fact, rhetorical analysis has been criticized heavily for producing arbitrary demarcations.³⁸ This may be due to several factors. Firstly, a real letter will always differ from theoretical guidelines. Paul, like any other ancient speech-composer, was probably not exempt from this common discrepancy between theory and practice. Secondly, it is difficult to determine how much rhetorical sophistication we should assume for Paul. Did he know the works of Aristotle and other elite authors? Even if not, however, there is reason to believe that he was acquainted with at least the basics of rhetoric.³⁹

A believable background for Paul's literary products may be found in the so-called *Progymnasmata* textbooks, which were used in elementary teaching of prose composition and rhetoric. Works by Aelius Theon, Hermogenes, Aphthonius, and Nicolaus of Myra are among the most important ones that have survived to our day.⁴⁰ These works contain a surprisingly similar set of exercises for composing different literary forms, such as fables, narratives, *chreiai* (anecdotes), refutations, confirmations, and *prosopepoeiai* (speeches in character). While the *Progymnasmata* more or less explicitly build on Aristotelian

36 See also Williams 2002, 84–85.

37 Witherington 2011, 25.

38 Watson 1997, 406; Williams 2002, 86; Klauck 2006, 225.

39 In the words of Aune (1987, 12–13): "Literary conventions and styles of the upper classes percolated down to lower levels, and they occur in attenuated and simplified forms in popular literature.... All levels of the population of the Roman world were exposed to the variety of structures and styles found in the rhetoric, literature, and art that were on public display throughout the Empire." For an overview of the basic questions for evaluating Paul's rhetorical ability, see Porter 1997, 533–538.

40 Thus, Kennedy (2003, ix) in his commentated translation of the four. Only Theon's work can be dated to the first century CE. The others are significantly later, but prove that the basic content of elementary rhetorical teaching remained strikingly similar for a long time.

premises of rhetoric,⁴¹ they, as preliminary education, teach only the composition of different *parts* of speeches.⁴² Thus, Paul too may be more familiar with the parts than the whole. Of special interest to the investigation of Paul's polemical discourse are the exercises concerning the composition of praise (*encomion*) and its polar opposite, blame/invective (*psogos*).⁴³

The challenges concerning the detection of speech genre and structure are further complicated by the fact that Philippians is essentially – a letter. The ancient conventions of letter writing need also to be considered.

The ancient letter includes the following parts:

1. the opening⁴⁴
2. (the thanksgiving in Paul's letters)
3. the letter body⁴⁵
4. the closing⁴⁶

The role of the thanksgiving section in Paul's letters has been much debated. Some take his letters to follow the tripartite (opening, body, closing) structure of the ancient letter, while others insist on a separate thanksgiving section as a fourth part. The majority considers a thanksgiving section or prayer to be unique to Paul, while the formulaic health wish in ancient letters is understood to be lighter in nature.⁴⁷ The actual letter body, for its part, is fairly flexible and adaptable to different situations and, consequently, less susceptible to formal analysis.⁴⁸ These divisions have, again, been differently detected in Philippians:

41 See e.g. Nicolaus of Myra, *Progymn.*, 47–48 (transl. Kennedy 2003, 154–155).

42 Kennedy 2003, 154 n. 63.

43 According to Aphthonius (*Progymn.*, 40, transl. Kennedy 2003, 111–112), the composer of an invective should “set out the upbringing and the deeds and the comparison and the epilogue in the same way as in encomia.” According to Hermogenes (*Progymn.*, 15, transl. Kennedy 2003, 81), “both use the same topics”.

44 The opening generally consists of a tripartite structure: A. sender in the nominative case, B. addressee in the dative case, C. a greeting. In the Pauline letters the members are often expanded (Bloomquist 1993, 74; Klauck 2006, 18).

45 The letter body is the longest part of the letter, and states the actual message. It may contain several sub-sections. According to Bloomquist (1993, 76) at least a body opening, a body middle and a body closing can be detected.

46 See Bloomquist 1993, 82.

47 Thus, e.g. Witherington 2011, 13. For proponents of three, four or even five sections (with paraenesis as fifth), see Porter and Adams 2010, 3. For characteristic features of Pauline thanksgivings, see Bloomquist 1993, 75. For locating the thanksgiving prayers either in the proem or the body of the ancient letter, see Klauck 2006, 21–23.

48 Alexander (1989, 90) marks in connection to the body that “there are very few rules in this game; but there are patterns to be observed”.

Watson (1997):

Rhetorical outline of Philippians	Epistolary outline of Philippians
Letter opening (1:1–2)	Letter Opening (1:1–2)
<i>Exordium</i> (1:3–26)	Thanksgiving (1:3–11)
<i>Narratio</i> (1:27–30)	Body Opening (1:12–30)
<i>Probatio</i> (2:1–3:21)	Body Middle (2:1–3:21)
– First Development (2:1–11)	– Transitions ^a (2:1–2)
– Second Development (2:12–18)	– Transitions (2:12, 17–18)
– <i>Digressio</i> (2:19–30)	– Transitions (2:19, 28–29)
– Third Development (3:1–21)	– Transitions (3:1, 17–21)
<i>Peroratio</i> (4:1–20)	Body Closing (4:1–20)
	– Transitions (4:1, 8)
	– Transitions (4:10)
Letter Closing (4:21–23)	Letter Closing (4:21–23)

a “Transitions” mark different formulaic or non-formulaic movements from one section of the letter to another.

Bloomquist (1993):

Rhetorical outline of Philippians	Epistolary outline of Philippians
Epistolary Prescript (1:1–2)	Letter Opening (1:1–2)
	Thanksgiving (1:3–11)
<i>Exordium</i> (1:3–11)	Body (1:12–4:20)
<i>Narratio</i> (1:12–14)	– Body Opening (1:12–14)
<i>Partitio</i> (1:15–18a)	– Body Middle (1:15–2:18)
<i>Argumentatio</i> (1:18b–4:7)	– Body Closing (2:19–30)
– Confirmatio (1:18b–26)	– Body Middle (3:1–4:7)
– Exhortatio (1:27–2:18)	– Body Middle (4:8–20)
– Exempla (2:19–30)	Letter Closing (4:21–23)
– Reprehensio (3:1–16)	
– Exhortatio (3:17–4:7)	
<i>Peroratio</i> (4:8–20)	
Epistolary Postscript (4:21–23)	

Witherington (2011):

Rhetorical outline of Philippians

Epistolary prescript (1:1–2)

Exordium (1:3–11)

Narratio (1:12–26)

Propositio (1:27–30)

Probatio (2:1–4:3)

Peroratio (4:4–9)

Concluding arguments (4:10–20)

Epistolary greetings and closing (4:21–23)

The relationship between speech-oriented rhetoric and epistolary features in ancient letters is no simple matter. There is no agreement on whether they should be viewed more in light of one or the other. Duane F. Watson argues that a solely epistolographical analysis is not enough to explain the structure of the letter to the Philippians, since epistolographical guidelines are too loose and, therefore, cannot explain the function of many individual parts in the letter.⁴⁹ Witherington is even more skeptical and believes that epistolographical observations should be “entirely secondary” to rhetorical analysis.⁵⁰ (Curiously, as will become evident below, this does not stop him from spending considerable time in determining the epistolary genre of Philippians). Not surprisingly, many have opted to keep both perspectives in view. This seems like a well-founded starting point, since in antiquity speech related rhetoric obviously had a great effect on literary composition.⁵¹ Furthermore, a letter was often viewed as a substitute for personal presence (cf. Rom 15:14–33; 1 Cor 4:14–21; 1 Thess 2:17–3:13 etc.) – and eventually read aloud in the context of a

49 Watson 1997, 400. Williams (2002, 85–86) follows Watson.

50 According to Witherington (2011, 13–15) the primacy of speech rhetoric is understandable in the light of the orality of ancient culture. He sees epistolographical conventions reflected only at the beginning and end of Paul's discourse.

51 Watson (1997, 406) states: “This integration [of epistolary and rhetorical features] is already in the text, for rhetorical theory and needs had influenced epistolary practice in the literary letters by this time.”

church meeting. Thus, it makes good sense that a letter could be formed in imitation of a speech.⁵²

As for epistolary genre, Adolf Deissmann understood Paul's letters as non-literary, "real" letters instead of as literary epistles.⁵³ Two plausible options within this category dominate the discussion on Philippians. Several scholars place the letter in the category of "friendship letters" or "friendly letters".⁵⁴ Others see the letter as a representative of so-called "family-letters".⁵⁵ Both make a good match with the deliberative rhetorical genre. Stanley Stowers distinguishes the following traits of friendship letters that are found in Philippians, which he calls a "hortatory letter of friendship":⁵⁶

1. The stock theme of presence and absence (1:27).
2. Expressions of affection and longing (1:7–8; 2:26; 4:1).
3. The language of friendship is not restricted to communication between equals, but also superiors could use it in writing to their inferiors.
4. According to Greco-Roman thought, friendship provided a context for moral teaching and exhortation. Philippians serves as an example of this. Paul also pictures himself as a psychagogue (esp. 1:24–25).

⁵² Williams 2002, 86.

⁵³ Deissmann (1909, 225, 232) posits a simple dichotomy: "The letters of Paul are not literary; they are real letters, not epistles; they were written by Paul not for the public and posterity, but for the persons for whom they are addressed"; "St. Paul ... was not a literary man". Recent interpreters allow for more categories. Brown (1997, 410–411) applies the transitional categories of "letter (epistle)" and "epistle (letter)", and Klauck (2006, 68–69) favors a tripartite categorization into nonliterary letters, official nonliterary letters, and literary letters.

⁵⁴ Thus already Koskeniemi (1956, 115–127). Others include White 1990; Fee 1995; Hansen 2009. See also Bockmuehl (1998, 34–38), who points out the important relationship between rhetorical and social conventions and offers an overview of the different ways in which the relationship between Paul and the Philippians has been viewed (Greco-Roman conventions of mutual *benefaction*, consensual association i.e. *societas*, patron-client relationship).

⁵⁵ Thus, Alexander 1989; Witherington 2011. Other categories of private letters include e.g. letter of recommendation, letter of exhortation, letter of praise or blame, letter of consolation (Klauck 2006, 68). Holloway (2001 and 2017, 1–10) opts for the last basing his conclusion on identification of various *topoi* in the letter. More recently, Betz (2015, 153) has classified Philippians as a *praemeditatio mortis*.

⁵⁶ Fee (1995, 2) is also of the opinion that "Philippians reflects all the characteristics of a 'letter of friendship', combined with those of a 'letter of exhortation'." Holloway (2017, 6) also points out that "consolation was one of the primary duties of friendship", thus, perhaps diminishing the division between letters of friendship and consolation. I regret, however, that Holloway's interesting argument came to my attention very late in the process and I was therefore not able to fully discuss it.

5. The emphasis on common projects and sharing (1:5; 1:7; 2:17–18; 4:14), oneness (1:27; 2:2), and especially the language of giving and receiving (4:15).
6. Paul's language in e.g. 1:27, 3:20 resembles the combination of the themes of friendship and ideal, utopian community in ancient philosophers such as Aristotle and Plato.
7. The emphasized theme of enmity as a counterpart to friendship (1:15ff, 1:27ff and ch. 3).⁵⁷

Stowers' observations are quite convincing, and it seems safe to assume that the features of ancient friendship letters should always be kept in mind when reading Philippians. Of special interest to this study is the last item on the list. Since enmity was a conventional theme in friendship letters, it cautions against reading concrete urgency concerning the matter too readily in the letter.⁵⁸

The case for friendship letters has, however, been questioned by e.g. Ben Witherington, who observes that language of friendship is completely missing from the letter.⁵⁹ Witherington points out that ancient friendship could essentially take two forms: it was either friendship between unequals in the sense that a patron could euphemistically call his clients "friends",⁶⁰ or it could be a personal relationship between two equals of high social status. Witherington notes that Philippians reflects neither of these ancient forms of friendship.⁶¹ In fact, Paul makes a great effort in order to avoid "full-scale reciprocity" with the Philippians especially when it comes to the gift he had received from them.⁶² Furthermore, Witherington deems the letter (on Cicero's terms) too mundane to qualify as a true friendship letter between learned equals.⁶³ Following Loveday Alexander,⁶⁴ Witherington suggests that Philippians is, in fact, a "family-letter", which is supported most of all by the family terminology and imagery of the letter: clearly, Paul refers to the Philippians as his siblings, as

⁵⁷ Stowers 1991, 107–114.

⁵⁸ In fact, for Stowers (1991, 114), Paul's misfortune – which he is forced to deal with in relation to both his friends and enemies (1:15ff) – is mainly his imprisonment and not the opponents.

⁵⁹ Similarly Betz 2015, 133.

⁶⁰ According to Osiek (2006, 194–196) the language of patronage became viewed as demeaning and at times was replaced by friendship terminology. Clients could be called "poor friends" or "little friends".

⁶¹ Witherington 2011, 18.

⁶² Witherington 2011, 18–19. Noted similarly already by Bockmuehl 1998, 35.

⁶³ Witherington 2011, 19–20.

⁶⁴ Alexander 1989, 87–101.

“beloved”, “brothers and sisters”, and depicts the Christ-believing community in family terms.⁶⁵

It is interesting that the relationship between Paul and the Philippians is never interpreted from the point of view that it may have been the Philippians (or some of them) who acted as patrons to Paul (the client) and stood above him in hierarchy (note e.g. Stowers’ point 3 above). This would explain the embarrassment Paul clearly feels about the gift he received (Phil 4:14–20): it would, in essence, make explicit that the Philippians acted as benefactors and patrons to Paul, who was dependent on them.⁶⁶ As Dale B. Martin points out, “in the Greco-Roman society money was given downward on the social scale”.⁶⁷ This setting would also explain the lack of friendship terminology in the letter. Paul would be in no position to call the Philippians his “little friends” or to imitate equal elite friendship. He would, in fact, do wisely to resort to family-terminology instead and to point to God as a supreme authority and father of all believers alike (2:15).⁶⁸ It is important to note that Paul’s financial dependence on the Philippians would not necessarily determine all the angles of the relationship between Paul and the Philippian church (or some of its members). If Paul was in a position parallel to a “household philosopher”⁶⁹ he may have had authority in matters concerning his expertise, even though he may otherwise have been in a subordinate position.⁷⁰

I believe an absolute either-or answer concerning the epistolary genre is neither necessary nor possible. As Duane F. Watson reminds us, while epistolary handbooks offer examples of ideal letters of different genres, these would often be elaborated into mixed types of letters in practice. According to

65 Witherington 2011, 14.

66 Or at least that Paul – in the case that he was unable to repay the Philippians – was in danger of becoming so (Martin 1995, 81). Betz (2015, 124–130) describes a contract between Paul and the Philippians, but does not explicitly discuss a patron-client relationship. In Betz’s scenario Paul seems to hold a dominant position as he, for example, reminds the Philippians of “their obligations” (125) and is “entitled to” the proceeds in their common account (127). The Philippians, on the other hand, had “accepted the status as ‘partners in the gospel mission’” (128).

67 Martin 1995, 81.

68 Martin (1995, 82) demonstrates Paul’s awkwardness concerning the Philippians’ gift in Phil 4: Paul spiritualizes the gift and claims it is in fact given to God and that God will repay it.

69 Term used by Martin (1995, 84–85) in relation to Paul’s dealings with the Corinthians. Martin suggests that some Corinthian upper class members have been offended by Paul’s refusal to take money from them and viewed it as a rejection of their offer of (asymmetrical) friendship.

70 For a (distant) parallel, see Lucian’s satirical story of the Greek scholar who takes a paid position as a philosopher in the house of a Roman aristocrat (*Merc. cond.*).

Watson, then, “Paul’s letters are a mixture of letter-types and there is wisdom in classifying them with the ancient category of ‘mixed’. This classification acknowledges the diversity of the contents and purposes of Paul’s letters, as well as the character of the broader practice of ancient letter writing itself.”⁷¹

To sum up, it should be emphasized that while all scholars admit the importance of ancient rhetoric and (some to lesser extent) epistolography in understanding Philippians, there seems to be no consensus on the details and depth of their influence. The results remain inconclusive. While the question of genres remains vague to some extent, the prominence of deliberative rhetoric and “friendship” and “family” features in the letter strongly implies, at least, that Paul’s relationship with the Philippians was generally intact and good at the time of writing. Despite Paul’s awkwardness concerning the Philippians’ gift, the fact that he did accept it at all may also reveal that he trusted the Philippians not take wrongful advantage of their power position.⁷²

Ancient rhetorical conventions are not only restricted to the general guidelines of letter – and speech writing. Polemical language used in invectives was also highly conventional – and markedly different from what is considered appropriate in our day. Recognizing these conventions is necessary in order to avoid the pitfall of *mishandling polemics*, as it prevents from reading the vilificatory texts too literally.

A seminal article on ancient polemic was published by Luke T. Johnson in 1989 (*The New Testament’s Anti-Jewish Slander and the Conventions of Ancient Polemic*). In the article Johnson seeks to understand New Testament anti-Jewish slander in its correct historical context⁷³ as well as within the conventional polemical rhetoric of the Hellenistic world. Johnson points out that slanderous language was in fact part and parcel of the highly stereotyped *vituperatio* found in various philosophical traditions⁷⁴ as well as in Jewish writings⁷⁵ of the Hellenistic times. He suggests that “the way the NT talks about the Jews is

71 Watson 1997, 402–403.

72 The situation was very different in relation to the Corinthians (1 Cor 9).

73 Johnson emphasizes that the anti-Jewish rhetoric of the NT was generated at a time, when there was no clear-cut division between “Christians” and “Jews”. The “messianist” movement was a sect inside the parent community of fellow Jews and “part of a much larger debate within Judaism, a debate with many parties, concerning the right way to read Torah, the text that shaped the people”. Furthermore, the nascent movement was often persecuted by the considerably more powerful parent community (an assumption strongly questioned in recent scholarship!). According to Johnson, the fact that “abuse tends to gain in volume when it is powerless” partly explains the strong slander by the Christ-believing messianists (1989, 423–428).

74 For examples see Johnson 1989, 430–433.

75 Johnson finds examples of this e.g. in Josephus and the Qumran scrolls (see 1989, 434–441).

just about the way all opponents talked about each other back then”.⁷⁶ In this stereotyped language the opponents are customarily called hypocrites (that is, preaching but not practicing), lovers of pleasure, lovers of money and lovers of glory.⁷⁷ An important point is that this kind of stereotypical slander was “not affected by facts”, but rather meant for internal consumption of the group with the view of edifying it at the cost of others.⁷⁸

Andrie Du Toit offers a list and description of the most prominent vilificatory techniques in the NT. These include the following accusations (examples by Paul in parentheses mine and DuToit’s):

1. Hypocrisy and falseness (Gal 2:4, 13; 2 Cor 11:13–15)
2. Obscure, shadowy characters (Gal 2:4; the use of the indefinite pronoun *τινες* of the adversaries in e.g. Rom 3:8; 1 Cor 3:1; Gal 1:7; Phil 1:15–18)
3. Sorcery (Gal 1:3)
4. Inflated self-esteem (2 Cor 10:12–18; Gal 6:13, Phil 3:4)
5. Moral depravity (Rom 16:18, Phil 3:19; 2 Cor 10:13–15)
6. A perverse influence (Gal 5:9; 5:12)
7. Association with dubious historical characters (Gal 3:25)⁷⁹
8. Prone to judgement (1 Thess 2:16; 2 Cor 11:15, Phil 1:28; 3:19)
9. Ludicrous characters (Phil 3:2–3; 2 Cor 11:5 ironic appellation “super-apostles”; Gal 5:12)⁸⁰

When reading Paul’s words on his opponents it is, thus, necessary to keep in mind, as Du Toit says, that “from a methodological perspective it would certainly be naïve to accept a one to one relationship between the depiction of the encoded adversaries in our documents and their real-life counterparts.”⁸¹ As Du Toit has pointed out, in vilificatory language the main question is not

⁷⁶ Johnson 1989, 429.

⁷⁷ Johnson 1989, 430–441 (esp. p. 432). See also Johnson 2001, 390–392.

⁷⁸ Johnson 1989, 433. See Marshall (1987, 56–60) for a fuller discussion on the truth-value of ancient invective. According to Marshall the speaker’s task in ancient rhetoric centered on persuasion through establishing *ethos* and generating *pathos* – not on establishing facts. While ancient invective could “contain elements of truth, much of it was exaggerated or invented” (1987, 57). In fact, “It was not necessary for it to be truthful at all” (1987, 57).

⁷⁹ Or, in general, offering derogatory interpretations of the opponents’ past. Josephus, for example, refutes an allegation by Apion that the Jews were actually Egyptians by race and expelled from Egypt for spreading some contagious disease (*C. Ap.* 11, 8).

⁸⁰ See Marshall (1987, 55–56) on making the opponent laughable, and (61–67) on conventional topics of ridiculing an enemy. These include social background, immorality, physical appearance, religious and philosophical belief, speech, avarice and, prominently, allegations of sexual deviance or immorality.

⁸¹ Du Toit 1994, 411. In connection with the study of opponents in the Pastoral epistles, Johnson (2001, 390) deplores the fact that “descriptions of rival teachers ... are taken

what the texts *says*, but rather what it *does*.⁸² This brings us to the level of the symbolic world. Polemical texts are highly ideological in nature and offer ample material for detecting how boundaries between in- and outgroups are drawn and reinforced, and how ingroup status is heightened at the expense of the outgroup. While ideological “mechanisms” like these are quite readily perceivable in polemical texts, they offer much less by way of historical accuracy.

The incompatibility between polemical text and real life should not, however, be over-emphasized. As Du Toit himself points out, the level of historical information provided by the text varies according to what is required by a given situation.⁸³ There are limits to what a speaker/writer can say without risking the reliability of his *ethos*. As for Pauline texts specifically, Lauri Thurén has, in my mind correctly, stated that the most reliable historical information on the opponents can be found in passages, where Paul utters something that does not have a counterpart in the common vilificatory rhetoric of the day (Barclay’s 5th rule for successful mirror-reading makes the same point). “When some feature of the characterization of the opponents does not meet contemporary standards, this may indicate information, which is so compelling that it had to be included in the text although it was atypical.”⁸⁴ Thurén takes as an example Paul’s references to circumcision.

Cautiousness of naive identification of real life opponents and their textual counterparts leads Du Toit to take up the other extreme: perhaps some textual opponents do not refer to real adversaries at all, but represent only paradigmatic or hypothetical examples, taken up *ad hoc* by the writer in order to argue a certain point.⁸⁵ What this means in terms of the Three-world model is that only the interplay between the symbolic and text world remains.

A similar notion has been proposed by Lauri Thurén, who suggests that Paul’s primary aim in polemical texts was to present his doctrinal theological system in a way that was understandable for his audience. Since this was quite demanding, Paul resorted to personalizing his message through the use of opponents. This ancient technique of *prosopopoieia* means that “the author presents theoretical standpoints as if they were advocated by real people”.⁸⁶ The opponents then serve a pedagogical purpose as “straw men” whose false

denotatively rather than connotatively; that is, they are taken as descriptive of who they were and what their teachings were, rather than as a conventional form of slander.”

82 Du Toit (1994, 403) points here to the *performative dimension* of language.

83 Du Toit, 1994, 403. See also Johnson 2001, 392.

84 Thurén 2005, 278. See also Johnson 2001, 392.

85 Du Toit 1994, 404.

86 Thurén 2005, 281; 2008, 91–94.

views Paul refutes.⁸⁷ Thurén bases his view on the conviction that beneath his diverse rhetorical expressions Paul had a fairly consistent theological system,⁸⁸ and that his letter-writing was primarily motivated by theological interests (Paul was “driven by his passion for theological thinking”).⁸⁹

It can be said in Thurén's favor that he is deeply aware of the methodological problems related to mirror-reading and gives due attention to both textual and ideological/symbolical questions. However, even though Thurén never completely denies that the textual opponents had some connection to historical people,⁹⁰ his reconstruction all but severs the ties between the symbolic world and the real world: One is left wondering *where the theology comes from*. Thurén suggests that Paul may have been provoked by theological tensions he perceived in the Scripture or by the problem of human boasting before God.⁹¹ But this still leaves unanswered which *experiences* in the real world prompted his observations. Opponents and opposition is, of course, not the only solution, but still, it is one that quite readily arises from the text. Following Peter Berger, theology can inherently be understood as legitimization of social practices.⁹² This means that theology is essentially a means to justify practices that already occur on other levels. As I see it, Paul's primary impetus did not come from incoherencies he perceived in the Jewish theological system of legitimization. Rather, his theological statements are responses to changes that originated in the real world and, in turn, necessitated transformations in the symbolic world. Furthermore, what we see in Paul's writings are only the first steps towards legitimating the altered symbolic world through theological statements.

87 Thurén 2005, 282–285.

88 Thurén opposes two scholarly fronts concerning Paul's theology. One is the view, common in older scholarship, according to which contextual situations simply served as “catalysts, which provoked Paul to formulate [his] universal theology” (2000, 6). The other is the extreme “contextualism” according to which Paul's theological statements are completely secondary to the practical, pastoral exigencies they were tailored to meet. According to this view, Paul had little or nothing resembling a coherent theology (2000, 8–13). Thurén's notion is that Paul's letters, *per se*, do not exhibit a coherent theology, but that he did have something like it in his mind and that this can be reached through de-rhetorization of the text. It is Thurén's contention that Paul “indeed had an organized, coherent theological system of thoughts, which is partly reflected in his texts” (2000, 17).

89 Thurén 2008, 94.

90 Despite the provocative title of his 2005 article “Paul had no Antagonists”, Thurén elsewhere stresses that the opponents are fictional “in the form they appear in Pauline text” (2008, 92).

91 Thurén 2000, 138–178; 2008, 94.

92 By legitimization Berger (1967, 29) means “socially objectivated ‘knowledge’ that explains and justifies the social order” or “answers to any questions about the ‘why’ of institutional arrangements”.

Paul does not yet formulate a comprehensive and coherent theological system of legitimation (or “a symbolic universe”). This was (and still is) the project of later generations.⁹³

How then, in the light of the caveat and all the above restrictions, should one go about finding textual material that will provide entrance into the historical reality behind the text? It has been proposed above that the text world has to be sifted with due attention to its conventional and unconventional features. The latter will more readily provide information, but the former will not be useless either in the hands of a careful reader.

I propose that one avenue for this is through the criterion of dissimilarity – also, for our purposes more suitably, called *the criterion of embarrassment*. Thurén proposes that it was useful for Paul to present himself as if in serious conflict with other apostles and as “filled with *pathos*”.⁹⁴ While this may be true in general, we are still left with a handful of important instances, where Paul is forced to admit failure in this struggle. These instances stand out as both embarrassing and dissimilar in relation to the general appearance Paul wants to convey.

The criterion works in two directions. Stronger evidence is provided by instances where the writer must explicitly state something that works against his/her general argument. Paul’s admittance in Gal 5:11 of having formerly preached circumcision is one example. Somewhat weaker evidence is gained when the writer fails to take up a point which – if historical – would have supported his general argument. A classic example in Paul is his silence of reconciliation with Peter in connection with the Antioch incident (Gal 2:11–14). We would expect him to parade it, had it really happened.

In historical reconstructions, this dissimilar or unfavorable material should be taken as the starting point with which any further material will have to cohere. While this may sound like a very negative reading of Paul, it is my contention that his statements need indeed to be viewed with due criticism. In fact, for methodological purposes, we need to allow (but not always assume) that he will distort, exaggerate, or downplay facts as much as he deems necessary. At the same time, however, we cannot methodologically advance from an assumption that he will tell outright untruths, for this would thwart at the outset any attempt to reach historically meaningful results.

To sum up, in terms of the possibilities of reaching the world of “flesh and blood” behind the texts, this study proceeds from an epistemologically

93 Generally, it is for the second and later generations to provide legitimation, as the social institution has become an objective reality for them (Syreeni 1990, 132).

94 Thurén 2008, 93.

optimistic stance. The uncertainties between the relationship of text and underlying reality do not necessitate that observations be restricted to the textual world alone, like some would have it.⁹⁵ Holmberg's words on the topic deserve to be quoted at length:

If undeniability, or even high certitude, is the criterion to be met by statements on history, historical research would inevitably be stymied, and not much could be stated about the past. An optimistic, ordinary historian, on the other hand, aims lower in historical certitude, but wants to reach judgments about what probably happened, and therefore allows more incertitude in seeking to make sense of all the data from the past. The sense-making is achieved through a process of verification and falsification of competing hypotheses. The purpose is to arrive at a qualified judgment, about which of these reconstructions of the past is the historically most probable one. "Most probable" does not mean "undeniably true", but rather a defensible, yet improvable, approximation of historical truth.⁹⁶

3 Social Psychological Viewpoints (SIA) and Identity Construction

Social-scientific criticism has in the last decades become an inalienable part of biblical scholarship. It is part of a development towards greater interdisciplinarity between the humanistic and natural sciences and a wider diversity of methods in biblical research.⁹⁷ John H. Elliott, a central proponent of social scientific criticism of the New Testament, summarizes the approach as "the phase of the exegetical task which analyzes the social and cultural dimensions of the text and of its environmental context through the utilization of the perspectives, theory, models, and research of the social sciences".⁹⁸ The benefit of social sciences to biblical study is both heuristic and explanatory. In the first sense, it offers "new ways of framing questions [and] alerts the researcher to

95 This is the stance adopted by e.g. Lieu (2004, 23, 60–61), who is an example of someone who takes the linguistic turn and the role of texts in identity construction seriously. However, Lieu has, rightfully, been criticized by Roitto (2009, 37), who in turn claims that "Many of the texts of the early Christ-movement are, however, so blatantly in dialogue with realities outside the text that we are bound to misunderstand the texts unless we ask what they are in dialogue with."

96 Holmberg 2008, 9.

97 Horrell 2002, 3.

98 Elliott 1993, 7.

previously unexplored aspects of social behavior”.⁹⁹ In the second, it helps to understand acquired data through models and theories.¹⁰⁰

Two general orientations can be distinguished in the approach. The first one is anthropological in nature and focuses on describing the social values, institutions and dynamics of the ancient Mediterranean environment.¹⁰¹ Special emphasis is placed on understanding how these differ from modern North Atlantic ones.¹⁰² The second strand is more decidedly *exegetical* in that it seeks to interpret biblical texts by the use of both traditional historical exegesis as well as social scientific methodology.¹⁰³ Another, partly overlapping, categorization recognizes a continuum from pure description of social history to more and more elaborate application of social scientific theory.¹⁰⁴

The use of social scientific models¹⁰⁵ and theories in biblical scholarship has been the object of considerable debate.¹⁰⁶ Doubt has been raised as to whether theorizations created in the modern society can be applied to ancient texts, which, moreover, are very scarce.¹⁰⁷ Another criticism has had to do with a perceived threat of reductionism, that is, the attempt to explain religion solely by

99 Horrell 2002, 15.

100 Or, “to produce etic information” – not to be confused with creating material evidence (Dvorak 2007, 260–261).

101 Elliott 1993, 32; Dvorak 2007, 254–255.

102 A pioneering work in this field is Bruce Malina’s *The New Testament World. Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (2001, first ed. 1981). A more recent, comprehensive work is *The Handbook of Biblical Social Values* (1998, eds. Bruce Malina and John Pilch).

103 Dvorak 2007, 255–256. An interdisciplinary approach like this has, according to Elliott (1993, 9), the potential to create new methodological insights as well as to “cast unidisciplinary presuppositions and techniques into critical light”.

104 Luomanen 2013, 203–204. Philip J. Richter (1984, 77–90) makes the following division: 1. description of social realia, 2. social history, 3. analytical use of a sociological concept, 4. the use of sociological theories and models “to explain a particular problem or suggest links between apparently unrelated data in the same or different sources.” For Richter, the first three uses are historically descriptive in nature and thus “proto-sociological”. The last one is “sociological work proper” in that interest lies in understanding and *explaining* historical data from a sociological theoretical perspective.

105 For the confusion around what exactly is meant by “models”, see Luomanen, Pyysiäinen, and Uro 2007, 18–19. Malina (1983, 11) defines models quite lightly as “scenarios we bring into reading a document”, and “abstract, simplified representations of some real-world object”. Others stress that models act as a link between observations and theory (“something less than a theory and more than an analogy”, Thomas Carney quoted by Holmberg 1990, 14).

106 For a useful summary of criticism and response, see Luomanen 2013, 205–206; Luomanen, Pyysiäinen and Uro 2007, 18–20, and the more colorful and subjective account by Elliott 2008, 31–32.

107 Horrell 2002, 15–16; Luomanen 2013, 202.

economic and social factors.¹⁰⁸ Some worry has also been expressed over inappropriate imposition of models on the evidence.¹⁰⁹ These criticisms have been answered by stressing that all research (and human cognition in general) presupposes a use of models, so it is best to do it consciously and transparently.¹¹⁰

Social-scientific models are non-absolute in character: they are not “ontological statements”. Therefore, they should be evaluated according to their usefulness.¹¹¹ In this study the SIA will be used heuristically “as a help to frame new questions and look for evidence nobody cared about before”.¹¹²

The SIA will, in a sense, make visible the symbolic world between the textual and historical worlds and offer fresh explanations both to texts and to historical information. The SIA viewpoint will not, however, be applied to all the historical data dealt with in the study but will be used to clarify certain important and interesting questions that have not been satisfactorily explained through traditional historical criticism. The advantage of a social scientific model is that the conclusions are not being “determined by mere feelings or intuitions or those unexamined assumptions about the shape of things that are usually termed ‘common sense’”.¹¹³

The *social identity approach* is a social psychological theory, which seeks to understand the individual human being as a member of a group/groups and the interaction between groups. It is not a rigid scientific model, but rather a perspective or an approach that builds on a few basic assumptions and is

108 Horrell (2002, 16–17) admits that the worry is founded inasmuch as the social sciences regard culture and knowledge as socially constructed and advance from a standpoint of “methodological atheism” (the words of Berger 1967, 180). This makes social scientific and theological “narratives” often incompatible. Horrell, however, believes that comparing the early Christian movement to other groups does not necessarily rule out investigating it as a distinctive phenomenon in a more “theological” sense. I myself side with Hakola (2015, 31), who, discussing Johannine scholarship, finds that the use of “secular” approaches is necessary in order to “decode the claims for exceptionality presented in the sources in theological and mythical language and understand them in light of regular, social psychological processes”.

109 Luomanen 2013, 205. Here an erroneous, positivistic understanding of models sometimes lurks in the background. See e.g. Esler’s response to Susan Garrett’s criticism of models in favor of an interpretivist standpoint (1995b, 5–7).

110 Holmberg 1990, 15–16; Dvorak 2007, 262; Elliott 2008, 31; Luomanen 2013, 205. Luomanen, Pyysiäinen, and Uro (2007, 19–20) make a useful link here (as with the question of imposing models) to the universal, cognitive tendency of humans to categorize (see discussion on categorization below).

111 As Esler (1995b, 4) puts it: “Models are heuristic tools, not ontological statements. Accordingly, they are either useful or not, and it is meaningless to ask whether they are ‘true’ or ‘false’”.

112 Holmberg 1990, 15.

113 Holmberg 1990, 14.

constantly being revised and discussed. The basic building blocks of the approach were originally formulated by Henri Tajfel and his colleagues in the 1970s and significantly developed in the 70s and 80s by Tajfel and especially by his student John C. Turner.¹¹⁴

The historical background for the development of the SIA lies with the events of the Second World War, which acutely raised the need to understand discriminative human behavior. Tajfel, who experienced the war personally, wanted to explain how it was possible that “normal” people were capable of such atrocities as the death camps and the mass-murder of the Jews.¹¹⁵ What the SIA proposed was that these questions could not be answered simply by appealing to the personal psychology of individuals in a reductionist manner. The group was to be understood as more than just a sum of its parts. Group behavior was to be observed on its own as something qualitatively different from individual, personal behavior.¹¹⁶ In fact, the basic understanding of *the social* as a factor *per se* is a central starting point in all social sciences, including social psychology. While the theoretical insights of the approach have later been applied to various historical situations, the study at hand is related to the emergence of the approach in terms of subject matter as well, since it seeks to understand the birth of some of the biblical material where Jews are portrayed negatively, and which at least partly influenced the selection of Jews as hated “others” during the Second World War.

The social identity approach is an umbrella term, which encompasses two distinct but related theories, the *social identity theory* and the *self-categorization theory* (and their later developments). The first one was created by Tajfel and Turner in the 1970s, and its main objective is to explain intergroup relations and behavior, especially intergroup discrimination. Self-categorization theory, on the other hand, is mainly accredited to Turner alone,¹¹⁷ and centers on explaining group membership and group behavior from the point of view of the individual.¹¹⁸

114 The theoretical framework lies scattered in many works (e.g. Tajfel 1978, 1981). Hogg and Abrams (1988) and Haslam (2004) offer reader friendly yet thorough introductions to the approach.

115 For Tajfel's personal motivations arising from his experiences in ww II see Tajfel 1981, 1–2.

116 For a historical background and discussion about reductionism within social psychology, see Hogg and Abrams 1988, 11–14. Floyd Allport's reductionist view (see Turner 1987, 10–12 for an overview) which assumes that a group is nothing more than a collection of individuals, is often referred to as a position opposite to that of SIT (Hogg and Abrams 1988, 6–7, 12; Esler 1998, 41).

117 Turner in his foreword in Haslam 2004, xviii.

118 John C. Turner in his foreword to Haslam 2004 (xviii–xix); Luomanen, Pyysiäinen and Uro 2007, 21.

The theoretical background of SCT is heavily indebted to SIT and can be understood as a continuation and elaboration to it. Most notably, the SCT draws on the concept of social identity as formulated in the SIT (see below). The theory seeks to explain the cognitive processes that explain how the individual becomes a group member and how group behavior is possible.¹¹⁹ The question of how groups influence the behavior of individuals is also of central interest in SCT.¹²⁰ For the purposes of this study it is not necessary in the following overview of the SIA to distinguish at each point the background of different ideas either in SIT or SCT.¹²¹

Social identity, as first formulated in the SIT, is “that part of an individual’s self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership.”¹²² Or, similarly put, it is “the individual’s knowledge that he/she belongs to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significance to him/her of the group membership.”¹²³ Shortly, social identity is “self-conception as a group member”.¹²⁴

Three dimensions are distinguished in social identity. The *cognitive* dimension denotes the awareness of belonging to a group. The *emotional* dimension has to do with the emotions attached to the membership and attitudes towards in- and outgroup members. Thirdly, the *evaluative* dimension denotes the fact that the person views himself in relation to other persons in other social groups, evaluating the value of his membership his own group.¹²⁵

In relation to the concept of social identity, SIT and SCT have searched to answer somewhat different, but not contradictory, questions. While SIT has used the concept to explain group behavior and intergroup discrimination, SCT has sought to go deeper into the cognitive mechanisms underlying social identity and its salience. It has endeavored to answer questions such as “What is the relationship between personal and social identity? What makes people

119 Haslam 2004, xix.

120 Haslam 2004, 28–29.

121 Turner himself (1987, ix) does not see a problem in lumping the two together for terminological convenience as long as it is understood that they are “substantively different theories, in terms of the problems they address and the hypotheses they propose”.

122 Tajfel 1978, 63.

123 Tajfel 1972, 31.

124 Abrams and Hogg 1990, 2.

125 The levels of emotion and evaluation are what makes social identity *psychological*, whereas the mere knowledge of belonging to a group forms the *sociological* part of the equation (Hogg and Abrams 1988, 7).

define themselves in terms of one group membership rather than another? How exactly is a person's psychology transformed by his or her group ties?"¹²⁶

Since a person always belongs to several groups, he or she will also hold several different social identifications. These are *contextual*, which means they become active depending on the context. One identification may be salient in a certain environment, during a certain time-period, but recede in another. However, it has more recently been emphasized that varying contextual factors do not fully define social identities. It has been proposed that while context greatly effects the individual's momentary group identification, there are also "chronic social identifications" that exert secondary influence.¹²⁷ Thus, there is something akin to a joint influence of contextual and chronic self-categorization. This study will advance from the starting point that the social identifications of both Paul as well as the Philippians are varied and contextual in nature. The contextuality of Paul's social identifications and the interplay between his contextual and chronic identifications will become particularly evident when we discuss Paul's effort to identify himself with the Gentile Philippian audience in the light of his persistent identification as a Jew (ch. 6).

Social identity can also be portrayed as something distinct and different from *personal identity*. While the personal identity comprises a person's individual features and constitutes that which separates him/her from everyone else, a social identity covers that which the person has in common with other members of a given group. There is a so-called "interpersonal-intergroup continuum", which means that the salience of personal versus social identity differs according to a given context.¹²⁸ At the one end, mainly in personal encounters, the personal identity is salient,¹²⁹ while at the other extreme, in group situations, a person can become completely depersonalized of the self (personal identity) and become interchangeable with other members of the group. This, then, leads to group behavior, which, according to the theory, is

¹²⁶ Haslam 2004, 28–29.

¹²⁷ Sherman, Hamilton, and Lewis (1999, 92–93). For example, in relation to Second Temple Jewish groups, Hakola (2007, 272–273) states that "it is possible to take the social identities of even the most radical groups as a mixture of contextual polemic against outgroups and more chronic and latent categorization of all Israel as the same".

¹²⁸ "Salience" here refers to "the conditions under which one or the other type of identity becomes cognitively emphasized to act as the immediate influence on perception and behaviour" (Kawakami and Dion 1993, 526).

¹²⁹ However, the extreme forms of social and personal identity in interaction are hypothetical: a situation of purely personal encounters without the effect of social categories is unimaginable (Haslam 2004, 22–23).

something qualitatively different from individual behavior.¹³⁰ In the light of what was said above of the “family” and/or “friendship” genre of Philippians (ch. 2), it would be tempting to view Paul’s relationship with the recipients of the letter as more personal than social. However, especially with regard to the opponents, Paul is busy reinforcing and maintaining a group identity shared by himself and the Philippians. It is an emphatic “we” who are defined as “the Circumcision” (3:3).

SIA draws heavily on two basic psychological processes, *categorization* and *self-enhancement*. Simply put, categorization (the cognitive aspect in SIA) denotes the process of “partitioning the world into comprehensible units”.¹³¹ It “simplifies perception”¹³² by grouping stimuli. Categorization is realized through *accentuation* and *attenuation*: differences between categories of stimuli are psychologically accentuated, while differences between objects inside a category are attenuated (minimized). This is the so-called *meta-contrast principle*.¹³³

The process of categorization is a built-in, cognitive function of human perception, which can be and has been authenticated empirically.¹³⁴ The relevance for SIA lies in that the categorization effect has been proven to be at work also in social situations: differences between members of the same group are down-played (stereotyping), while differences between ingroup and out-group are accentuated.¹³⁵ Accentuation is, quite expectedly, sharper, when the particular categorization is important to the perceiver.¹³⁶

¹³⁰ Turner 1982; Hogg and Abrams 1988, 25. Hogg and McCarty (1990, 12) point out that there is a difference between the SCT and SIT here. In the SCT the actions of a person along this continuum are always understood as taking place in terms of the self.

¹³¹ Abrams and Hogg 1990, 2.

¹³² Hogg and Abrams 1988, 19.

¹³³ Abrams and Hogg 1990, 3. Hogg and Abrams (1988, 19) point out the function of the phenomenon: “It is fundamental to the adaptive functioning of the human organism, as it serves to structure the potentially infinite variability of stimuli into a more manageable number of distinct categories.”

¹³⁴ A classic experiment was conducted by Tajfel and Wilkes in 1963 (See Hogg and Abrams 1988, 19–20). See Tajfel 1981, 62–69 for other early studies of “perceptual over-estimation”. See also Roitto’s 2009, 30–34 discussion on the universal, innate cognitive features of the human mind (and pp. 49–53 specifically on categorization).

¹³⁵ To quote Fiske and Neuberg (1990, 14): “We have neither the cognitive capacity nor the time to deal with all the interpersonal information we have available to us ... Given our cognitive resources, it is both simpler (requires less effort) and more efficient (requires less time) for a perceiver to use stereotyped information to make inferences about individuals belonging to a group than it is to analyze each person on an individual basis.”

¹³⁶ Hogg and Abrams 1988, 20–21.

Self-categorization, on the other hand, explains how the individual – through categorizing herself/himself – becomes a member of a group by accentuating similarities between herself/himself and the other ingroup members.¹³⁷ The above-mentioned effort by Paul to categorize himself in the group of the Philippian Gentile Christ-believers is an example of self-categorization (ch. 6).

The second fundamental component in the SIA is that of *self-esteem*, that is, the basic human need and desire for positive self-evaluation.¹³⁸ This can be understood as the motivational basis in SIA. The enhancement of self-esteem (or: *self-enhancement*) is always achieved through social comparison, which can take place between individuals, but – in line with the theory of social identity – also between groups (inter-group comparison).¹³⁹ The esteem held by the ingroup reflects on the individual through his or her social identity. Naturally, the effect on the individual is either positive or negative depending on the group's status in relation to the group/groups it is being compared to. Group esteem is pursued mainly by means of positive *discrimination* of the ingroup in comparison to outgroups through selective accentuation in favor of the ingroup. The goal is to provide *positive distinctiveness* for the group.¹⁴⁰ In practice, this means that there is a joint effect of categorization (stereotyping) and social comparison at work.¹⁴¹

Not surprisingly, categorization and ingroup self-enhancement are present in Phil as basic elements of Paul's discourse relating to the opponents. Paul repeatedly accentuates and polarizes the difference between the in- and outgroups. In the beginning of Phil 3, for example, he is careful not to even disclose that the groups in fact share a common belief in Christ (ch. 6). In fact, ancient polemical rhetoric in all its harshness is a perfect representation of the

137 Self-categorization is, thus, also the regulating principle for how an individual "chooses" the salient social identification in a given context. The overriding principle is that both the contrast to the outgroup and the similarities to the ingroup should be maximal (Hogg and Abrams 1988, 25–26).

138 Hogg and Abrams 1988, 23; Abrams and Hogg 1990, 2–3.

139 The basic theory about the means and function of social comparison was formulated by Festinger in 1954). For some differences between Festinger's theory and SIT, see Hogg and Abrams 1988, 22–23.

140 "The quest for *positive distinctiveness* means that when people's sense of who they are is defined in terms of 'we' rather than 'I', they want to see 'us' as different to, and better than, 'them' in order to feel good about who and what they are" (Haslam 2004, 20–21). To be sure, it has also been pointed out that the need for self-enhancement is not always as fundamental a factor in intergroup behavior as believed. Hogg and Abrams have suggested other motivators for intergroup discrimination, such as the need for a coherent self-conception and the search for meaning and order (Hogg and Abrams 1990, 42–47).

141 Hogg and Abrams 1988, 23, 26.

human tendency to present relevant outgroups as maximally different from the ingroup and in as negative a light as possible. Paul, as discussed above, applies these ancient polemical conventions to repeatedly slander and embarrass the outgroup in order to indirectly enhance the esteem of the ingroup.

Competitive situations between groups can, of course, be various in nature. When groups compete over objective gains, such as goods, territory, and the like, this is called *objective competition*. When the competition is over status, prestige, power etc., namely “the relative position of one’s group irrespective the objective gains or losses”,¹⁴² this is *social competition*.¹⁴³

In an attempt to find out the minimum requirements for competition and the ensuing discriminative behavior between groups it was proven in the so-called *minimal group* experiments that comparison and discriminative behavior, in fact, require nothing more than the simple consciousness of belonging to a group. No knowledge of the make-up, characteristics or even the relative status of either group is necessary at the outset.¹⁴⁴ The need for differentiation between groups turned out to be so strong that it “is fulfilled through the creation of intergroup differences when such differences do not in fact exist, or the attribution of value to, and the enhancement of, whatever differences that do exist”.¹⁴⁵ This speaks quite strongly in favor of the innate need for differentiation and enhancement of self-esteem and gives perspective to the question, which originally prompted the formation of SIA: according to Haslam, the group memberships evoked in the experiments not only made “otherwise fair, decent and normal people act in a way that was transparently unfair, but [had them do so] so in the absence of any obvious reason for such behavior.”¹⁴⁶

However, Haslam points out that the minimal group experiments are misinterpreted, if they are taken as proof that discrimination occurs automatically or universally. Ingroup favoritism is, according to him, “a reaction to particular social psychological circumstances” and will vary according to the situation.¹⁴⁷

142 Hogg and Abrams 1988, 50.

143 The division and terminology were first proposed in Turner 1975.

144 Turner 1981. While Sherif had, in his experiments leading to his influential realistic conflict theory, successfully proven that group behavior could not be explained solely through its individual members, his theory still left unanswered the question of the *minimal* sufficient conditions for intergroup hostility (Hogg and Abrams 1988, 46). For Sherif’s experiments and theory, see Sherif, White, Harvey 1955; Sherif et al. 1961.

145 Tajfel 1981, 276.

146 Haslam 2004, 20.

147 Haslam 2004, 21. In the words of Turner, “the functioning of social identity processes always takes place in a social context and is shaped by social structural realities” (Turner’s foreword to Haslam 2004, xix).

Several factors in the historical setting contribute to ingroup favoritism. Tajfel and Turner identified three effective factors: 1) the meaningfulness of the given group membership to the individuals' self-concept, 2) the extent to which the prevailing context encourages comparison, 3) the relevance of the outgroup.¹⁴⁸ Social psychologists Hinkle and Brown (1990) have also isolated two crucial factors that explain differences between groups in their level and nature of intergroup comparison. The first is the individualistic or collectivist nature of the group (cf. Tajfel and Turner's first point).¹⁴⁹ Individualism makes for low group commitment, while a collectivist frame of mind goes hand in hand with high group commitment and leads to ingroup bias. In terms of social identity, a collectivist group or culture is one where people tend to "categorize themselves as members of various social categories, rather than in terms of their personal identity".¹⁵⁰ The second significant feature is the comparative or non-comparative nature of the group's ideology and/or situation (cf. Tajfel and Turner's second point).¹⁵¹ Intergroup discrimination is highest, when both a comparative ideology and collectivism dominate.¹⁵² (See below for how the ancient Mediterranean culture reflects these features). The discriminative reactions are, of course, even more expected when a group knows its "enemies" and is in prior competition with them either over objective goals and/or power and status.¹⁵³ That society in reality "*comprises of social categories which stand in power and status relations to one another*", is another basic assumption behind SIA.¹⁵⁴

148 Tajfel and Turner 1979, 41.

149 This tendency does not only operate on the (subcultural) level of groups but also on the (cross-cultural) level of society at large and even as traits of individual people (Hinkle and Brown 1990, 65–67).

150 Roitto 2009, 55.

151 Since individualism/collectivism does not have enough explanatory power in itself (very collectivist but non-competitive groups exist), the second feature of comparativeness is necessary (Hinkle and Brown 1990, 67). Individualistic culture can bring about competitive situations (e.g. team sports), and not all collectivist groups exhibit competitive behaviors (e.g. monastery units).

152 Hinkle and Brown 1990, 48–70. In a later study, the terms individualist-collectivist and autonomous-relational social orientation are applied by Brown et al. (1992, 327–342). The second feature above is called autonomous-relational. It denotes the extent to which an individual is likely to evaluate his own group in relation to outgroups (relational) or in relation to some abstract idea or the ingroup's past achievements (autonomous).

153 Haslam 2004, 21 refers to a study of coal mine employees (Stephenson and Brotherton 1973, 1975), among whom the level of discrimination was found to vary according to the level of preexisting disagreements and the size of the groups.

154 At this point the indebtedness of the SIA to structuralist/conflict views of society along the lines of e.g. Marx and Weber is evident (Hogg and Abrams 1988, 14–15, emphasis theirs).

As for what determines which groups in real life are likely to become competitors, it has been proven that a level of similarity between the groups is a key factor. Groups that belong to the same level of abstraction and look similar from the viewpoint of a higher level of abstraction seem to have most interest in distinguishing themselves from each other.¹⁵⁵ In the New Testament, Acts, for example, recounts situations where outsiders, such as Roman officials, fail to make a distinction between non-believing Jews and Christ-believers (Acts 18:12–15). Situations like these are likely to have prompted the groups to distinguish themselves from each other more clearly – and to become enemies in the process. It has been suggested by recent studies that proximity of groups may, quite conversely, also *reduce* ingroup favoritism and enhance (personal) contacts between the groups.¹⁵⁶ Understandably, this poses a threat to ingroup distinctiveness as well. These kinds of threats to ingroup distinctiveness form the essential background to the hostile image of the Jews in many early Christian sources. While Paul also makes occasional remarks against non-believing Jews (e.g. 1 Thess 2:14–16), he is generally more interested in distinguishing his ingroup from other *Christ-believers*, who present an even closer “other”. In Phil his aim is essentially to make sure the addressees make a clear distinction between their ingroup and the Jewish Christ-believing outgroup he calls “dogs” and “the Mutilation” (3:2). Even though there seems to have been no noteworthy contact between the Philippians and the outgroup yet, Paul’s negative presentation of the outgroup is understandable as a proactive to any future contact.

The minimal group tests suggest that discriminative measures are likely to be “exaggerated” as the reaction is not always in proportion to the stimulus. This seems to be the case in many places in Philippians as well. However, historical social psychological reactions do not take place in a laboratory setting. Accordingly, this study will not only be interested in the level of the symbolical/ideological world but will make serious inquiry into the “real world” historical events that underlie the social psychological phenomena. Ch. 4 will be especially devoted to reconstructing the historical events leading to Phil from the point of view of Paul’s experiences with the opponents. Ch. 3, on the other hand, will elucidate the historical situation of the Philippian church vis-à-vis the challenge brought on by the opponents. It will be suggested that Paul’s discourse concerning the opponents considers both aspects, although he may also be engaged in projecting his own personal frustration more than is sometimes allowed.

155 Turner et al. 1987, 21. See Jetten and Spears (2003, 203–241) for the role of low distinctiveness in production of intergroup differentiation.

156 Roccas and Schwartz 1993, 594.

When a group enjoys high status and dominance, it simply needs to defend the status quo. For a subordinate group the situation is different. Its low status is reflected on the members, who in turn suffer from low self-esteem and feel the pressure to change the situation one way or another. The strategies for this depend on how the individual sees the nature of society and groups, and what kind of actions he believes are available for him (*subjective belief structures*).¹⁵⁷

If the individual believes that the boundaries between groups are permeable, his or her belief structure is that of *social mobility*. This means that the person believes he or she can simply leave the subordinate group if needed and join another one that will provide him/her with a more positive social identity. This belief structure is individualistic in nature and, ultimately, serves to reinforce the ideology and status quo of the dominant group.¹⁵⁸ However, if the boundaries between the groups are understood to be fixed and impermeable (a collectivist mode), self-enhancement can no longer be reached individually. Other means for attaining a positive identity inside the original group are needed, which involve improving the whole group's status (hence the name "*social change*" belief system).

Two kinds of strategies are possible. Acts of *social creativity* proceed from the assumption that the status quo between the groups is secure and cannot be changed concretely. The lower-status group sees its position as legitimate (e.g. the Indian caste-systems),¹⁵⁹ and engages in "secure comparisons". These include measures such as redefinition of the lower-status group characteristics that are usually deemed negative¹⁶⁰ or pointing out new dimensions of comparison that favor the lower-status group.¹⁶¹ Another possibility is simply to choose another (same- or lower-status group) for comparison.¹⁶² Social creativity measures are often notable in stable subcultures.

Direct *social competition* is an option when the subordinate group considers the prevailing inter-group relations illegitimate and believes it can achieve a real change in its status through confrontation with the dominant group. This can take on many forms, from a struggle on a purely conceptual level to bloody

157 Hogg and Abrams 1988, 27; Haslam 2004, 23.

158 Hogg and Abrams 1988, 27–28; Haslam 2004, 23–24.

159 Tajfel 1981, 266, 320.

160 Esler (1998, 53) gives as an example the slogan "Black is beautiful" by the 60s African-American movement.

161 This means that the low-status group has a positive quality of some kind, which it wants to adduce as a point of comparison with the higher-status group. The quality is seen as positive by both groups.

162 For further elaboration and examples of each strategy, see Hogg and Abrams 1988, 28–29.

TABLE 2

Social belief structure	<i>permeability/ impermeability of inter-group boundaries</i>	<i>legitimacy/ illegitimacy of prevailing inter-group relations</i>	<i>stability of prevailing inter-group relations</i>	<i>interpersonal/ intergroup (individualist/ collectivist)</i>	<i>course of action</i>
<i>Social mobility</i>	permeable	legitimate	stable	individualist	passing into higher status group
<i>Social creativity</i>	impermeable	legitimate	stable	collectivist	change of comparative dimensions, reference group or redefinition of attributes
<i>Social competition</i>	impermeable	illegitimate	unstable	collectivist	openly challenging outgroup

revolution and terrorism.¹⁶³ It is important to note that the *relative* position of the groups is often in question, not a fight over objective gains and losses.¹⁶⁴

Paul's aim in Phil is to secure the continued existence of the ingroup, which consists of Gentile Christ-believers, against the threat of social mobility to other groups, most particularly the Jewish Christ-believing outgroup. This outgroup presents itself as a possible enticement because of its higher status. As will become evident, the social belief structure represented in Paul's intergroup discourse is not clear cut since he uses measures of both social creativity and social competition. This is, in fact, a normal finding when the possibility of actual change is in doubt.¹⁶⁵

Leadership can be defined as "the process of influencing others in a manner that enhances their contribution to the realization of group goals".¹⁶⁶ SIA argues against popular and conventional trait-based views of leadership, which posit that leaders rise to their position on account of their personal characteristics such as intelligence or imagination. According to SIA leadership is

163 Hogg and Abrams 1988, 29.
164 Hogg and Abrams 1988, 50.
165 Esler 1998, 52.
166 Haslam 2004, 40.

strongly a group phenomenon.¹⁶⁷ The likelihood of someone becoming, remaining and being effective as a leader depends on how he/she “epitomizes (in the dual sense of both *defining* and *being defined by*) the social category of which he or she is a member”.¹⁶⁸

This means that the leader needs to exhibit maximal *ingroup prototypicality* to gain power. The leader, “in order to change consensus, must ‘be’ consensus.”¹⁶⁹ A prototype is always, in the absolute sense, abstract and fictive. It is “an image of an ideal person who embodies [the group’s] character”.¹⁷⁰ As social identity in general, prototypicality is also relative and contextual. All the members of a group display a degree of typicality, which varies according to the prevailing comparative frame of reference.¹⁷¹ The leader is someone who, in a given situation, maximally represents the group’s social category – and thus the group’s shared social identity-based interests.¹⁷² He or she is most probably *an exemplar*, a real life embodiment of the identity of a group.¹⁷³ Thus, it is not the personal identity, but rather the social identity of the leader, that is most significant.

According to SIA leadership is a dynamic pursuit. The leader both meets the expectations of the group and effectively influences it. The leader can, for example, restructure the group’s social context in order to enhance his/her own prototypicality and consequently, to secure his/her position. Accordingly, the term “entrepreneurs of identity” is sometimes used of leaders in SIA.¹⁷⁴ One way to strengthen leadership in an unstable situation is through the strategy of *approval-seeking outgroup violation*, which essentially comprises of categorizing “us” and “them” rhetoric combined with actual hostility. It has been revealed by empirical studies that leaders whose positions were unsure were more prone to engage in intergroup conflict.¹⁷⁵ The significance of the leader’s

¹⁶⁷ Haslam 2004, 40–41.

¹⁶⁸ Haslam 2004, 45 formulates the same idea in a heading: “Leaders represent and define social identity”.

¹⁶⁹ Roitto 2009, 101.

¹⁷⁰ Esler 2003, 172. According to Esler a prototype differs from a stereotype in that the latter is used by the ingroup in reference to an outgroup and is usually negative. Prototypes also do not require the ingroup members to abandon their distinctiveness (the ingroup heterogeneity effect), while stereotypes promote the idea of outgroup homogeneity.

¹⁷¹ Haslam 2004, 46.

¹⁷² Haslam 2004, 45–47.

¹⁷³ Esler 2004, 172–173. Esler also takes up the question of past figures significant for the group. Here the line between exemplar and prototype is not as clear as figures from the past become more ideally characterized over time.

¹⁷⁴ Haslam 2004, 47; Haslam et al. 2011, 137.

¹⁷⁵ Rabbie and Bekkers 1978, 9–20.

prototypicality is attested by studies that revealed that when the leader was viewed as highly prototypical, his/her intergroup behavior had only a minimal effect on his/her position. "In short, prototypical leaders had license to lead in whatever ways they saw fit, while aprototypical leaders needed to act in ways that clearly proved their ingroup status".¹⁷⁶

It is evident from Phil that Paul presents himself as a leader of the recipients of the letter, although it is likely that he, from an economic and social standpoint, was actually a client of some of the Philippians (see above). He appeals to himself as an example to be followed (3:17) and considers himself to be in a position to warn and guide the Philippians. Inasmuch as leadership requires that the leader be a prototype for the ingroup, Paul's effort to identify with the Gentile Philippians despite his Jewish identity becomes, again, interesting. It will be argued in ch. 6. that Paul goes to great lengths to achieve this identification but reveals the vulnerability of this identification by repeatedly resorting to outgroup violation.

The temporal aspect of social identity has, thus far, attracted relatively little interest.¹⁷⁷ Susan Condor, for example, feels that social identity theorists have neglected the temporal dimensions of group identity, although the question was originally of central interest to Henri Tajfel.¹⁷⁸ Theories of *social memory* (or collective memory) by scholars such as Maurice Halbwachs have, of course, been around for a considerable time, and are very helpful in investigating the formation and function of a group's views of its past. The theories advance from a similar constructivist paradigm as the somewhat later social psychological approaches and argue that memory is essentially social in nature.¹⁷⁹ Accordingly, history is viewed as "a symbolic reserve",¹⁸⁰ from where material can be chosen and reinterpreted for present purposes.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁶ Haslam 2004, 47–48.

¹⁷⁷ For a more detailed discussion on the question of the temporal aspects of social identity in the light of theories of social memory and possible social identities, see Nikki 2016.

¹⁷⁸ Condor 1996, 292, 304. This, according to Condor, is partly explainable by the fact that laboratory experiments, in particular, are necessarily synchronic in nature.

¹⁷⁹ Halbwachs published his *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire* in 1925. He deplored that the psychology of his day investigated the memory of individuals as "isolated beings", ignoring "all the bonds which attach individuals to the society of their fellows". Conversely, Halbwachs claims that "it is in society that people normally acquire their memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognize, and localize their memories" (transl. Coser 1992, 38).

¹⁸⁰ Haslam et al. 2011, 178 quoting A. Reszler, "L'Europe à la recherche de ses symboles" (*Les Temps Modernes* 1992, 550).

¹⁸¹ Haslam et al. 2011, 178.

For the purpose of discussing the temporal aspects of *social identity* in particular, Marco Cinnirella has introduced the concept of *possible social identity*. He builds on the theory of *possible selves* by Hazel Markus and Paula Nurius (1986), where possible selves represent “individuals’ beliefs about what the self was in the past and might become in the future, together with some estimate of the probability that different possible selves will be realized”.¹⁸² While Markus and Nurius concentrate on individual self-conception, Cinnirella extends the concept to social identities suggesting that “one particular kind of possible self is a *possible social identity*”, meaning “perceptions of current and possible group memberships”.¹⁸³ This entails the tendency to “fantasize ... about what might happen to current groups in the future”, but also about “what it might have been like to have been a member of a particular group in the past.”¹⁸⁴ According to Cinnirella, various “*desired*” and “*feared*” *possible selves* have the potential to add to a group’s positive distinctiveness or to diminish it.¹⁸⁵ In fact, the drive to attain desired identities and to avoid feared ones directly impacts behaviour and motivation related to social identity maintenance.¹⁸⁶

Accordingly, it is not surprising that the past and the future function as domains of social contest: groups compete over the ownership and interpretation of collective memory as well as over the future possibilities.¹⁸⁷ One group can challenge another group’s positive sense of its own past¹⁸⁸ or, in religious discourse, for example, curse the other group to future damnation. In the current study, the aspect of social time will be applied especially to discussion of Paul’s eschatological statements and their polemical significance. Ch. 7 addresses the way Paul in Philippians creates a common, glorious future identity for the ingroup while offering the opponents only a feared future of destruction (Phil 1:28; 3:19).

Since the social identity approach was initially created in a modern Western society in order to explain events taking place therein, a few words on the applicability of the approach to ancient Mediterranean society are in order. On a very basic level the use of the approach can be justified through the

182 Summary by Cinnirella 1998, 229. For recent emphasis on *narrative identity* in personality psychology, see McAdams, 2008, 242–262.

183 Cinnirella 1998, 230.

184 Cinnirella 1998, 231.

185 Cinnirella 1998, 229, 237–242.

186 Cinnirella 1998, 243.

187 See Esler (2003, 175) on contesting the past. In Cinnirella’s words: “some intergroup conflicts may be partly caused by struggles between in- and outgroups over the definition of possible social identities” (1998, 243).

188 Cinnirella 1998, 242. See note 127 for an example.

experimentally derived data on the categorizing nature of human perception, which can be taken to apply to all people in all times and places. In a cultural sense, however, the ancient Mediterranean differed significantly from our current North Atlantic society. Thus, we can and should also expect differences in the occurrence and significance of intergroup comparison between these cultures.

Drawing on Hinkle and Brown's observations on what produces intergroup discrimination, Philip Esler has noted that both isolated characteristics (collectivism and comparative ideology) were especially prominent in ancient Mediterranean culture. As for the collectivism, it is understood that, since even modern Mediterranean societies (affected by the globalization of the media and the like) are more collective than post-industrial North-Atlantic countries, the ancient ones must have been even more so.¹⁸⁹ Comparative ideology, on the other hand, is evident already from the term "agonistic" used by anthropologists to describe the extremely competitive nature of Mediterranean culture.¹⁹⁰ Esler sees the prominent role of honor and shame, as well as the idea of limited and indivisible good, as factors which give rise to competitiveness. The latter means it was universally believed that "... all goods exist only in finite and usually indivisible portions, which means that one person or group can only enjoy an accretion of some good at the expense of some other person or group."¹⁹¹

As for application to New Testament texts, it has been pointed out that groups with voluntary admission and membership are generally more comparative.¹⁹² In SIA concepts, we may then expect to find in NT texts arguments based on and/or reflecting social identity more often than in modern texts. Also, we can expect to find relatively many texts containing signs of social comparison.

189 To be sure, bluntly claiming that the ancient Mediterranean culture was collectivistic is a simplification for the purposes of this brief overview. Roitto (2009, 55–61) summarizes scholarly discussion on the question of collectivism/individualism in ancient cultures and offers his own plausible view on the matter. He especially criticizes the concept of "corporate identity" (originally formulated by Henry Wheeler Robinson) as well as Bruce Malina's claim that the ancient Mediterranean person did not consider introspection meaningful. Roitto claims that the ancient person always retained a clear sense of individual self, even though "the individual in a collectivistic setting was self-stereotyped, interdependent and experienced himself/herself as integrated with others" (2009, 58). As for introspection, Roitto demonstrates that ancient sources do not lack interest in individual virtues and emotions, but that this introspection is still generally conducted with the interests of the social category in mind (2009, 59–60).

190 See Malina 2001, 36.

191 Esler 1998, 45–49. See also Roitto 2009, 91.

192 Brown et al. 1992, 339.

Among New Testament scholars, Philip F. Esler stands out as the pioneer of applying SIA to Paul's letters. Of special interest to the present study are Esler's investigations on the letter to the Galatians (*Galatians*, 1998) and the letter to the Romans (*Conflict and Identity in Romans. The Social Setting of Paul's Letter*, 2003). In the latter Esler reads Romans as Paul's effort to reconcile between two competing ethnic groups of Christ-believers in Rome, the Greeks and the Judeans.¹⁹³ Esler depicts Paul as applying a strategy of *recategorization*, i.e. of creating (or strengthening) for the competing groups a common ingroup identity, which transcends the competing ethnic identities.¹⁹⁴ In practice, this means that Paul stresses the common identity of the believers as righteoused by God in order to reduce emphasis and focus on the divergent and competing ethnic identities.¹⁹⁵

As for Galatians, the situation envisaged by Esler is quite the opposite. He interprets the letter as Paul's attempt to contest the attractive Israelite¹⁹⁶ social identity offered to the addressees by the opponents. Here the *threat* is the merging of two groups (Gentile Christian and Israelite) to the detriment of the other. I will argue below, that the same dynamic is in view in Philippians. Esler's views on Gal will be discussed further in ch. 4.

J. Brian Tucker, on the other hand, has applied SIA to 1 Corinthians in order to explain how Paul forms the social identity of the Corinthian Christ-believers (2010, 2011).¹⁹⁷ Tucker argues that 1 Cor reflects a situation where members of the church identified with their Roman identity in a way that Paul wanted to correct. In 1 Cor Paul, then, negotiates and positions the social identity of the Corinthians anew. Tucker stresses, however, that for Paul previous social identities still have a continuing significance and existence in the new identity "in Christ". In fact, they are necessary for the spread of the movement in its social environment.¹⁹⁸ Since the study at hand concentrates on the outsider opponents mentioned in Phil and identifies them for the larger part as Jewish Christ-believers, the question of the significance of Jewish identity for Gentile Christ-followers is central. However, it will be argued that at points Paul also

193 Esler (2003, 62–74) opts for the translation of Ἰουδαῖοι as "Judeans" (and not "Jews"). See n. 2 in ch 1.

194 *Recategorization* (or the *common ingroup identity model*) refers to "redefining a situation of conflict so that the members of rival groups (or subgroups antagonistic to one another) are subsumed into a larger single, superordinate category" (Esler 2003, 29). For an overview of the mechanism and its use, see Esler 2003, 29–33.

195 For an overview of the argument, see Esler 2003, 357–365.

196 In this book Esler still uses the term "Israelite".

197 The first book deals with 1 Cor 1–4 and the second one takes up the rest of 1 Cor.

198 Tucker (2010, 61–66) follows and applies to Roman civic identity the "particularistic" view of Campbell (2006), who posits the continuing value of Jewish identity in Paul thinking.

refers to the Gentile identity of the Roman Philippians and attempts to distance the addressees from their Roman identity by exaggerating the hostility of the relationship between the Christ-believers and the surrounding Roman society.¹⁹⁹

Although this study mostly applies social psychological and rhetorical insights to the text, reference will also be made at times to the theory of *religious behavior as costly signaling*. The theory helps to make sense of the numerous references to hardship and suffering Paul makes in the course of Philippians. The wider theoretical background of the theory is in complex systems view of religion, evolutionary theory and human behavioral ecology.²⁰⁰ The theory essentially argues for an adaptive role of religious, especially ritual, behavior in human evolution.²⁰¹ Despite the different framework, the theory shares a common interest with the social identity approach in understanding and explaining mechanisms that enhance group cohesion and intra-group cooperation.

199 Recently an extensive collection of articles from different areas of social scientific approaches to the NT (with emphasis on questions relating to social identity) was edited by Tucker and Coleman A. Baker (*T & T Handbook to Social Identity in the New Testament*, 2014). Studies applying SIA to pseudo-Pauline literature include the PhD dissertations of Minna Shkul and Rikard Roitto. Both have applied SIA to the deuterio-Pauline Ephesians. Shkul's *Reading Ephesians: Exploring Social Entrepreneurship in the Text* (2007) investigates the construction of Christianness in Ephesians. Roitto's *Behaving as a Christ-believer. A Cognitive Perspective on Identity and Behavior Norms in Ephesians* (2009 and 2011) explores the relationship between identity and behavior norms in the text.

200 Complex adaptive system theories investigate the functioning of self-regulating systems with the assumption that a system is more than its parts and entails behaviors particular to the system-level (see above for similar starting point in SIA). Already Durkheim (1915) and Rappaport (1979, 1999) explained the role of religion and religious rituals from the point of view of social cohesion. In this sense their views coalesce with the framework of complex systems view of religion. The viewpoint of evolution and behavioral ecology was brought into play by Rappaport, and more recently developed by e.g. Irons and Sosis. See Heimola (2012, 24–27) for a historical overview and relationship between the different frameworks. William Irons, a behavioral ecologist, is generally regarded as the pioneer of the ritual theory of costly signaling (see Sosis 2003, 92–93; 2004, 168).

201 There is a marked difference, even a debate, between proponents of evolutionary psychology/cognitive science of religion and behavioral ecologists. The former mostly view religion as a by-product of human evolution with little to no adaptive significance, whereas the latter emphasize the adaptive role of religion through group cohesion and pro-sociality (Heimola 2012, 27–29). Commitment-theoretical views also differ from explanations that rely on the so-called rational choice theory, according to which “individuals choose their actions rationally” and weigh “the anticipated costs and benefits of actions and [seek] to act so as to maximize net benefits” (Stark 1997, 169). The rational choice theory has been criticized for being tautological and unrealistic about the rational facilities of individuals (see Heimola 2013, 364–365).

According to William Irons, costly signals are behaviors that are painful and/or time and energy consuming and, as such, too hard or too costly to fake.²⁰² The function of these behaviors is to signal the commitment of the performer to other members of the same group, and to help to screen out free-riders, who look to benefit from the efforts of others without participating in the costs.²⁰³ Through expectations of costly behavior the members of the group are thus able “to monitor one another’s commitments to the community and its moral code, thereby facilitating the formation of larger and better united groups.”²⁰⁴ Improved intra-group cooperation and cohesiveness has evolutionary significance, because “human evolution is driven by group-group competition, which requires intra-group cooperation.”²⁰⁵

I refrain from the difficult question of how “ritualized” Paul’s expressions of suffering are. Nonetheless, it is my contention that Paul emphasizes his suffering and hardships (especially his imprisonment), since they constitute costly signals, which testify to his commitment to the ingroup. As exemplary behavior, they also encourage the addressees to show similar devotion.

202 Sosis 2003, 92 speaks of behaviors that “entail significant proximate costs, such as time, energetic, and material costs, as well as physical and psychological pain.” Irons (2001, 293) divides between emotional and cultural signals, and calls religion the “most elaborate and effective” of the latter.

203 Sosis 2003, 93; 2004, 168.

204 Irons 2001, 293. Irons (2001, 296–297) refers to the principle of indirect reciprocity as a background factor. The principle suggests that altruistic behavior produces reciprocal aid that flows back to the altruist through indirect channels. Simply put, this refers to a third party, who, after observing the situation, decides to reward the altruist. There is a link with rational choice theory here.

205 Irons 2001, 293.

The Context of the Letter to the Philippians

1 Jews and Christ-Believers in the Roman Empire

From a socio-political standpoint, the life of early Christ-believing communities was strongly influenced by their relationship both to the Roman Empire and to the Jewish communities living therein. Christ-believers needed to manage and survive in the Roman society, which was often suspicious of foreign and new cults and sometimes outright hostile to them. Because Jewish communities often enjoyed significant privileges in the Roman environment, non/identification with Jewish tradition became an important question for the Christ-believing communities. This socio-political situation forms the larger background for Paul's views concerning the relationship between Christ-believing and Jewish identities in Philippians. Similarly, it functions as a necessary backdrop for understanding Paul's relationship and disagreements with the Jerusalem Christ-believing community, although both situations also have to do with intra-Jewish discussion, the latter more than the first.

There was a law in the Roman Empire, dating from the Republican era, which prohibited foreign cults unless they were authorized by the state (Cicero, *Leg.* 2.8–9, esp. 2.8.19). It seems, however, that the law was not actively enforced during the early Empire, as there is no evidence that people were tested for their religion or legally charged for participating in foreign cults.¹ This tolerant undercurrent was probably due to the similar practice of Hellenistic rulers. It may also have been a necessity: the Empire was simply too vast and the current influx of foreign cults too massive to control. The attention of the Roman authorities was focused on the political stability of the Empire. In general, “*the Romans seem to have been content to leave other people to their own indigenous religious activities as long as they did not promote debauchery or cause public disorder.*”² However, there seems to have been certain nervousness about maintaining peace and order. Accordingly, foreign cults were often viewed with deep suspicion and they were easily linked to subversive actions. Local

¹ Tellbe 2001, 26.

² Tellbe 2001, 27. Emphasis his.

situations heated up quickly and led to prohibitions and expulsions. The measures were, however, often short-lived and sporadic.³

A central aspect of Roman religious life was the imperial cult, which developed rapidly during the time of Augustus, and quickly became the most widespread religious cult especially in the Eastern Empire.⁴ Religious veneration of Roman rulers built on previous Hellenistic practice, and was a matter of “transposing to the Roman power the well-tried categories of the Hellenistic cult of benefactors and rulers.”⁵ The cult served many purposes. Firstly, it offered religious legitimation to the imperial ideology by combining divine and political spheres in the figure of the emperor.⁶ It also provided some form of uniformity for the diverse people of the Empire.⁷ Furthermore, it was used to measure and control the loyalty and submission of the people. Cities could demonstrate their loyalty by engaging in the veneration of the emperor as visibly as possible.⁸ During Caesar and Augustus oaths of allegiance were demanded of leaders of newly annexed areas. Later Augustus expanded the demand so that all inhabitants of the Empire were obligated to acknowledge the imperial cult.⁹ Despite these demands, it has recently been emphasized that honoring the emperor did generally not need to be *imposed*, but emerged as “a natural outgrowth and spontaneous response to imperial power on the part of civic communities and inhabitants.”¹⁰ In practice, private individuals were not actively controlled,¹¹ but failing to participate could lead to charges for particular cities or prominent persons. Overall, strong social pressure made it so that participation in the imperial cult became a norm for everyone.¹²

3 A famous example is the suppression of the Bacchanalian cult in Rome (186 BC), reported by Livy, *Urb. cond.* 39.8.3–19.7 (see Klauck 2003, 114–115; Rauhala 2013, 290–292). Another good example is the erratic suppression and rehabilitation of the cult of Isis. It was banished from Rome in 58 BC, approved again in 43 BC, again prohibited from the pomerium by Augustus, expelled from Rome by Tiberius in 19 CE, only to be restored once more by Caligula (Smallwood 1981, 203; Tellbe 2001, 28–29).

4 See Tellbe (2001, 32) for further details on the spread. The ritual forms of the imperial cult were similar to other contemporary cults, including sacrifices, temples, priests, images, processions, feasts and athletic contests (Klauck 2003, 313; Räisänen 2010, 50).

5 Räisänen 2010, 48 (following Klauck 2003, 284). Similarly, Punt 2012, 4.

6 Tellbe 2001, 31. See Punt 2012, 3–4 for theorizing discussion about the religious element in imperial ideology in general.

7 Tellbe 2001, 31; Hellerman 2005, 81; Räisänen 2010, 50.

8 Tellbe 2001, 32–33.

9 Dio Cassius, *Hist.* 51.20.6–7; Tellbe 2001, 34.

10 Harland 2013, 214.

11 This would happen for the first time during emperor Decius in 251 CE.

12 Tellbe 2001, 34–35.

The position of Jews in the Roman Empire cannot be summarized shortly. The main sources from both Roman (Tacitus, Suetonius, Dio Cassius) and Jewish (Philo, Josephus)¹³ sides witness that Jews often enjoyed special protection by the authorities. However, like other minorities, they were also subject to occasional ridicule, tension, and even physical violence.¹⁴

In light of the available evidence it seems clear that Jews enjoyed a protected position in the Roman Empire.¹⁵ The underlying reason behind Roman leniency was a deep-seated respect for ancestral traditions (*mos maiorum*), and a policy of preserving the status quo whenever it did not offend the Roman people or gods.¹⁶ Traditionally, it has been held that there was in the Roman Empire a special “charter”, which allegedly defined the legal status of all Jews in the diaspora, and granted them a legal position as *religio licita*. More recently, however, it has become evident that this is a simplification. The position of *religio licita* is difficult to maintain as “there is no evidence of an imperial list of officially recognized cults”, nor of “a department of religious affairs which licensed foreign cults”.¹⁷ The thorough investigation by Tessa Rajak has revealed that there was no universal Roman law concerning Jewish rights. Instead, she claims that decisions pertaining to Jews were made case by case as a response to prevailing political situations, and with no reference to a formalized standard of a charter.¹⁸ She also questions the legal force of the individual decisions.¹⁹ Rajak has, on the other hand, been criticized by Mikael Tellbe for moving too far in the other extreme. While Tellbe agrees with Rajak’s denial of a formal, universal charter, he points out that some of the concessions by

13 The main sources on the legal status of the Jews under Roman rule at the beginning of the Common Era: from the Roman side Tacitus (c. 55–117 CE), Suetonius (c. 69–140 CE) and Dio Cassius (c. 155–230 CE); from the Jewish side Philo (his *Legatio ad Gaium* and *In Flaccum*) and especially Josephus’ *Antiquitates Judaicae*. See Tellbe (2001, 24–25) for discussion on the reliability of these sources. Tellbe, along with most contemporary scholarship, takes them as generally reliable.

14 Like Wilson (1995, 20) puts it: “the Jews enjoyed recognition as a venerable if eccentric people” and “they were the object of popular suspicion and ridicule, as nonconformists commonly are”.

15 According to Tellbe 2001, 42 the Jews enjoyed “unusual concessions ... not granted to any other subject peoples”.

16 Frend 1965, 106: “Privately, people should worship those gods whose worship they had received from their ancestors”. For ancient evidence, see e.g. Suet. *Aug.* 93 and Josephus *A.J.* 19.283, 20.13.

17 Tellbe 2001, 27. In fact, Tertullian is the first to use the term *religio licita* (*Apol.* 21.1.).

18 Rajak 1984, 107–123.

19 Rajak 1984, 115–116.

Caesar concerning the Jews did, in fact, seem to form a basis for later statutes.²⁰ Furthermore, some edicts by the emperors were clearly meant to apply to all Jews in the Empire (e.g. Claudius' edict concerning Jewish rights in 41 CE).²¹ This means that while the legal position of Jews in the Empire may not have been defined in a rigid, legal manner, there were meaningful imperial edicts that could be invoked in particular situations, as well as a general willingness on the part of the Roman authorities to protect the Jews' right to live according to their ancestral customs.

The most notable rights of the Jews concerned their permission to assemble (even in times when it was forbidden for other groups),²² permission to observe the Sabbath and ethnic festivals, permission to collect and send the temple tax,²³ permission to observe dietary laws, exemption from military service,²⁴ and exemption from participation in the imperial cult.²⁵ A fine example of an emperor's goodwill to Sabbath-observance is the way Augustus permitted disadvantaged Roman Jews to collect their corn-handouts a day later if the distribution fell on a Sabbath (Philo, *Legat.* 158).²⁶ As for the imperial cult, it has recently been emphasized that its role in the relationship between Jews and Christ-believers and the Roman officials has often been exaggerated, as there seems not to have existed any explicit legal obligation in the Roman Empire to participate in the cult, nor any specific exemption of Jews from it.²⁷ The Jewish communities in Greek cities seem to have enjoyed a fairly

20 "... they did nevertheless create a political and social norm throughout the empire that could not have been without legal value" (Tellbe 2001, 56).

21 Tellbe 2001, 57–59, largely following here Pucci Ben Zeev (1998).

22 Most notably, Caesar explicitly excluded the Jews from the law restricting the formation of *collegia*. Tellbe notes that while the category of *religio licita* may be anachronistic, the permission to assemble granted by Augustus to the Jews (when other groups were forbidden) clearly made them at least a *collegium licitum* (2001, 59).

23 Smallwood (1981, 125–127) on temple tax and the rare exception by Flaccus, who forbade sending the tax to Jerusalem.

24 See Smallwood (1981, 127–128) on the actual rulings on military exemption (the decree by Lentulus and Fannius during the mobilization in 49 BC, and Dolabella's letter from 43 BC, which no longer restricted exemption to Roman citizens).

25 Tellbe 2001, 43–51.

26 See Barclay 1996, 292–293.

27 Harland 2013, 214. It was more a question of social conformity/deviance and political subversiveness (Tellbe 2001, 47). It does not seem that the emperors (at least the living ones) were usually considered gods. According to Tellbe (2001, 33–34), they were "*divi* instead of *dei*", but often incorporated into the cult of traditional gods and, especially in the east, sometimes assigned divine attributes. Sacrifices in the imperial cult were not offered directly to the emperor during his lifetime, but only on behalf of him (Klauck 2003, 313–314). Even so, the images involved made Jews shun the procedure (see e.g. Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.5). In replacement, Jews were allowed to use their own substitute forms which included "a

independent position both religiously and socially. They were organized in distinct, semi-autonomous communities, sometimes referred to as *politeumata*,²⁸ which, for example, managed their own judicial affairs.²⁹

Despite, or more often because of, their generally privileged position Jewish communities also fell into conflict with other ethnic groups. Occasionally, quarrels broke out between Greeks and Jews, leading to appeals to the Roman authorities by one or both groups. A famous case is the outbreak of violence between Greeks and Jews in Alexandria in 38 CE. The events, described by Philo in *Flacc.* and *Legat.*, originated with confusion around Jewish rights to Alexandrian citizenship and the concomitant exemption from taxation.³⁰ Both the Jews and the Greeks sent embassies to the emperor, and when Claudius finally settled the matter, the previous rights and privileges of the Jews were restored, but their full citizenship denied.³¹ On similar occasions the Romans seem to have been fairly sympathetic to the Jews.³²

The Jews were often also subjected to slander and prejudice because of their exclusive lifestyle, monotheism, and divergent habits such as circumcision and abstinence from pork.³³ Josephus provides examples of the harshest kind of polemic in his refutation of Apion, the learned Egyptian, who was the leader of the Greek Alexandrian delegation. According to Josephus, Apion denigrated the Jews by claiming, for example, that they kept and worshipped an ass's head in the temple (*C. Ap.* 11, 9) and annually captured a Greek man and

special formula for the oath of allegiance to the emperor, the offering to God of prayers and sacrifices on behalf of the life and welfare of the emperor, benefactions to the synagogues for the emperor's well-being, or dedicatory inscriptions or objects to the honor of the emperor" (Tellbe 2001, 47–48).

28 A community like this could be called a *politeuma*, *laos*, *ethnos*, *katoikia*, or something else (Tellbe 2001, 37). For *politeuma*-terminology, and how it may be reflected in Phil, see ch. 8 of this study.

29 Tellbe 2001, 36–37.

30 For a fuller exposition of the events, see Barclay 1996, 48–55. According to Stern (1974, 403) the privileges of the Jews in their Alexandrian *politeuma* put them, together with Greeks, above the Egyptian population.

31 Josephus, *A.J.* 19.280–85; CPJ 153. See Barclay 1996, 57–60 (who takes the papyrus as a more reliable source).

32 "... when problems arose, the Romans regularly intervened in favor of the Jews" (Tellbe 2001, 57). Trebilco (1991, 174–175, 183–185) has provided a healthy corrective to views which exaggerate conflicts between Jews and Greeks by showing that in Asia, they mainly enjoyed a peaceful coexistence.

33 Smallwood 1981, 123–124. Smallwood offers a selection of representative Greco-Roman authors (123 n. 15), who depict Jews as e.g. unsocial and anti-social, credulous, eccentric, physically unattractive, lazy and mean. Authors include e.g. Lucius Annaeus Seneca, Petronius, Plutarch, Juvenal and Tacitus (for examples, see also Barclay 1996, 307).

fattened him up in order to sacrificially cannibalize him – while swearing eternal hostility to the Greeks (*C. Ap.* 11, 8).³⁴

From time to time the Jews also “fell victim to Roman nervousness to political unrest”.³⁵ The report by Valerius Maximus dates the first expulsion of Jews from Rome to 139 BCE. According to Maximus, the Jews were expelled for transmitting their “sacred rites” to the Romans.³⁶ In 19 CE Tiberius conscripted 4,000 Jews into the army and expelled many others from Rome.³⁷ According to Dio Cassius this, again, happened because the Jews “flocked to Rome in great numbers and were converting many of the natives to their ways” (*Hist.* 57.18.5a).³⁸ In fact, there is evidence that interest in Judaism by the outsiders increased from the late Republic onwards.³⁹ Seneca, on the other hand, confirms that the reign of Tiberius witnessed a new interest in fighting non-Roman cultural and religious influences (*Ep.* 108, 22).⁴⁰ Later Tiberius restored the rights and the Jews were allowed to return.⁴¹ The next emperor, Gaius Caligula (37–41 CE), threatened to erect a statue of himself in the temple of Jerusalem (*Tacitus, Ann.* 12.54; *Philo, Legat.* 184ff.) but did not manage to realize the plan before his death.⁴² In 41 CE Claudius ordered the synagogues to be closed and in 49 CE banished Jewish from Rome because they were causing political unrest. This famous edict is attested even in the New Testament (*Acts* 18:2).⁴³ That the claims of commotion were not always woven out of thin air, is evident from the Jewish

34 For transl. and commentary see Stern 1974, 409–412. For a summary of Apion’s major accusations, see Barclay 1996, 73.

35 Tellbe 2001, 29.

36 Valerius Maximus, *Facta et dicta memorabilia* 1, 3:3. The mention survives in two different wordings in the later epitomes by Januarius Nepotianus and Julius Paris (transl. in Stern 1974, 357–360). See also, Smallwood 1981, 128–131. Barclay (1996, 285) considers the historicity of the statement quite problematic, perhaps reflecting Maximus’ own time (1st century CE) more than anything else.

37 The event is related by Josephus, *A.J.* 18.65–84; *Tacitus, Ann.* 2.85.4; *Suetonius, Tib.* 36; *Dio Cassius, Hist.* 57.18.5a. See Barclay 1996, 298–300.

38 Transl. Cary, see Stern 1980, 365.

39 Smallwood 1981, 205.

40 See also Barclay 1996, 299.

41 Tellbe 2001, 60.

42 The friendship between the Jewish king Agrippa and Gaius played an important role in preventing the catastrophe (Barclay 1996, 302).

43 The actions of Claudius in 41 and 49 CE are reported variously in the following ancient sources: *Suet. Claud.* 25.4; *Dio Cassius, Hist.* 60.6.6; *Orosius, Hist.* 7.6.15–6 (who mentions Josephus as his source). Interestingly, *Tacitus* does not mention the expulsion in account of the year 49 CE in his *Annales*. See Barclay (1996, 303–306) and Esler (2003, 98–99) for historical unclarity in the sources and an assessment of their reliability. Barclay himself “hesitantly” supports the assumption that Claudius in 41 banned meetings by the Jews and 49 CE enforced a limited expulsion.

war 66–70 CE. The utter and forceful suppression of the revolt by the Romans, in fact, forced the Jewish communities to thoroughly reassess their means to survive. It can be argued that, despite the destruction of the Jerusalem temple and the imposition of the *fiscus Iudaicus* in place of the temple tax,⁴⁴ the catastrophe provided an important stimulus for the formation of modern Judaism.⁴⁵

It may be concluded that although the general attitude of the Roman authorities toward the Jews was, in the first century CE, fairly positive, the situation was unstable, and any conspicuous activity by the Jewish communities could be viewed as potentially subversive and harmful, and suppressed accordingly. In particular, there seems to have been as special resentment on the Roman side for spreading Jewish customs to the Roman populace, which made it wise for the Jews to remain as inconspicuous as possible.⁴⁶

The relationship between the emergent Christ-believing movement(s) and the Jewish communities in the first century is a famously complex one. It is clear that the Christ-believing movement began as an intra-Jewish reform movement, but somewhere along the line, came to be regarded as its own entity.

Suetonius' report of the edict of Claudius in 49 most likely refers to the presence of Christ-believers in Rome but does not make a division between Jews and Christ-believers.⁴⁷ Suetonius simply states that the Jews got expelled from the city of Rome for "making disturbances" on account of "Chrestus" (*"impulsore Chresto"*, *Claud.* 25.4).⁴⁸ It is clear that he does not know that a non-living

44 It was Vespasian, who after the destruction of the temple, directed the Jewish temple tax to building a new temple in Rome for Jupiter Capitolinus (Josephus, *B.J.* 7.218; Dio Cassius, *Hist.* 66.7.2). The tax was not only a serious humiliation, but also made it necessary to define more clearly who exactly was a Jew (Barclay 1996, 76–77).

45 Barclay (1996, 310) sees that the termination of the temple tax and pilgrimage to Jerusalem weakened the ethnic sense of Judaism, but simultaneously made it more appealing and accessible to outsiders.

46 Tellbe 2001, 62–63.

47 Cook (2010, 21) believes that Suetonius' source did not make a distinction between Christians and Jews or Jews and Jewish Christians.

48 It has been debated whether the Chrestus referred to, in fact, means Christ. Smallwood (1981, 211), follows the important A. D. Momigliano (*Claudius: The Emperor and his Achievement*, transl. 1934) in thinking that a reference to Christ is "the only reasonable interpretation". Barclay (1996, 304) leaves the question open. The most interesting challenge to the *interpretatio Christiana* has been presented by Slingerland (1998, esp. pp. 203–211), who believes "Chrestus" refers to a freedman and an adviser (*impulsor*) of Claudius, who incited him against the Jews. Recently, Cook (2010, 15–22) has made an elaborate case for Chrestus as Christ. According to him Chrestus was a common Latin name, which makes it "apparent that Suetonius may naturally spell 'Christ' as Chrestus" (2010, 17). Furthermore, the pronoun *quidam* used in connection to Chrestus reveals that Suetonius is speaking of

person is in question. Fifteen years later, however, the emperor Nero is already able to single out Roman Christ-believers for persecution (64 CE).⁴⁹ These examples, however, cannot be understood universally. It is more realistic to assume that the relationship between Christ-believers and Jews in the first century took different forms in different locations and fluctuated with time. The groups were probably considered separate by insiders earlier than by outsiders.⁵⁰

From a socio-political perspective the dynamic of the relationship between Christ-believers and Jews was, not surprisingly, a multi-faceted one. On the one hand, Christ-believers could benefit from being identified with Jews because of their many social privileges.⁵¹ The formation of completely new *collegia* was tightly controlled, and novelties were viewed with great suspicion.⁵² Since the Romans held a special respect for antiquity, it was beneficial for the Christ-believers to claim adherence to the same ancient traditions as the Jews. The value is reflected, for example, in the way Paul in Gal and Rom reinterprets ancient Jewish history in order to appropriate it for the Christ-believers. The Christ-believers, however, were an expansive, missionary movement, which meant that they easily drew undesired attention to the Jews.⁵³ Luke, in particular, portrays situations where Christ-believers seem interested in emphasizing an intra-religious situation, whereas Jews actively seek to dissociate themselves from Christ-believers.⁵⁴ According to Luke, Jews habitually stirred up crowds against Christ-believers and accused them before local authorities instead of treating the matter amongst themselves, which would have signaled that the problem was an intra-Jewish one.⁵⁵ The situation would eventually begin to

a known person, not some arbitrary trouble maker (2010, 19). The later Christian apologist Orosius already speaks of troublemaking “impulsore Christo”. Witnessing to the possibility of mix-ups between Christ/Chrest, the original wording of Tacitus’ report on the persecution of Christ-believers by Nero in 64 also reads “Chrestianos” (Cook 2010, 40 n. 45).

49 Barclay 1996, 283; Tellbe 2010, 64. The most important ancient source for this event is Tacitus, *Ann.* 15.44.2–5. For a thorough commentary on the text, see Cook 2010, 39–82.

50 If Acts 11:26 is reliable here, the Christ-believers were referred to by a name of their own (Χριστιανοί) in Antioch already in the 40s (see Tellbe 2001, 65–66).

51 Tellbe 2001, 67–69.

52 Wilson 1995, 28.

53 Smallwood 1981, 212, 219.

54 E.g. Acts 16:20–21; 17:6–9; 18:12–17; 19:23–41; 23:6; 24:14–21; 25:18–19; 26:2–7; 20–23.

55 Tellbe 2001, 66–67. Luke has this happen on several occasions (Acts 13:44–52; 14:1–7; 14:19–20; 17:1–9; 17:13; 18:6–7, 12–17; 19:32–34; 21:27–36; 22:22–23, 22; 24:1–9; 25:1–12).

change as a result of the negative attention the Jews themselves received after the Jewish War (66–70 CE) and the rebellion of Bar Cochba (132–135 CE).⁵⁶

To sum up, there is a host of factors that influence the dynamic of non/identification of the Christ-believers with the Jews, including at least the following: tradition (both Jewish and that of early Christ-believers), social expediency (at a given time in a given location), and the expansive nature of the Christian proclamation.

2 The Date, Location, and Unity of Philippians

Locating Philippians in the span of Paul's lifetime has been notoriously difficult.⁵⁷ The three most commonly suggested locations for writing are Ephesus during Paul's so-called Third missionary journey (in the mid-50s), and Caesarea or Rome towards the end of Paul's career.⁵⁸ The following pieces of information are usually considered central for the discussion: 1. Paul is in prison (1:12–30) 2. and genuinely fears for his life (1:20ff.), 3. Timothy is with Paul (1:1), 4. Paul plans to visit the Philippian church upon release (2:24), 5. There is a *praetorium* at the location of Paul's imprisonment (1:13). The word can denote either the emperor's personal troops or a governor's palace.⁵⁹ 6. Paul can sustain contact with local Christ-believers (2:20, 4:21–22) 7. There has been some communication back and forth between Paul and the Philippian church during the imprisonment.⁶⁰ 8. There is no mention of the collection for the church of Jerusalem. In the following, the three most common solutions will be examined in light of these points. It will be concluded that Philippians is written either from Rome or Caesarea (which is slightly more likely).

56 Wilson 1995, 29. One reason for later unwillingness of some Christ-believers to identify as Jews may also have been the *fiscus Iudaicus*, which even many non-believing Jews sought to avoid. See e.g. Suetonius, *Dom.* 12; Barclay 1996, 310–312.

57 "Philippians is the most difficult of all the genuine Pauline letters to locate chronologically and geographically." (Lüdemann 1989, 103).

58 Also Corinth has been suggested by Dockx (1973), but with little following.

59 The exact meaning of the term has been discussed. It has been understood either as governor's palace (this is how Luke uses the word in Acts 23:35) or the emperor's elite troops, that is, the Praetorian guard (see Fee 1995, 113). Some would argue that the syntax of the sentence makes it likely that the reference is to people (Bockmuehl 1998, 75), but Paul could just as well use the term as a shorthand for the people in the governor's palace.

60 The Philippians have heard about Paul's imprisonment and sent Epaphroditus (with a gift) to serve him. They have also heard that Epaphroditus has fallen ill and expressed their concern over this (2:26). Paul also expects to send Epaphroditus and Timothy to Philippi before his own release (2:19, 25).

In the Ephesian hypothesis, Paul is assumed to have written Philippians during his long (52–55 CE) stay there, which took place during his so-called Third Missionary Journey. It is generally assumed that Paul also wrote Galatians and both Corinthian letters roughly during the same period. This means that in this solution a close temporal (and often also a thematic) connection between these and Philippians is assumed. Proponents include Jewett (1970a), Becker (1993), Osiek (2000), Wright (2003), Crossan & Reed (2004), Reumann (2008), Bormann (2012), and Sanders (2015).⁶¹

The solution matches points 3 and 4 perfectly. Acts reports that Paul sent Timothy from Ephesus beforehand to Macedonia and followed later himself (Acts 19:22; Acts 20:1), 1 Cor 16:10 suggests the same.⁶² Also, the relatively short distance between Philippi and Ephesus goes well with point 7: there is room for frequent exchange since the journey between the cities took only from a week to ten days.⁶³

Significant obstacles, however, remain. Firstly, there is no explicit mention of an imprisonment in Ephesus either by Luke (Acts 19) or by Paul himself in his later correspondence. This may be mitigated by the fact that neither Paul nor Luke seems to report Paul's every imprisonment. Paul himself relates in 2 Cor 11:23 that he had, by that time (ca. 55 CE), been incarcerated on several occasions. Both Luke and Paul testify to Paul's troublesome and threatening encounters in Ephesus.⁶⁴ Paul's own mention of having feared for his life in "Asia" (2 Cor 1:8) may correspond to point 2. However, even if a period of imprisonment were to be allowed in Ephesus, Luke's report of Paul's Ephesian stay (Acts 19) does not fit the letter's image of Paul "detained on a capital charge for a considerable length of time".⁶⁵ As a Roman citizen, Paul would not have had to endure this anyway since he could have appealed to Caesar.⁶⁶ According to Luke, this is, in fact, exactly what he later did in Caesarea (Acts 25:10). As for a *praetorium*, there is no evidence that there was one in Ephesus. The city was a senatorial, not an imperial, province and thus had no governor's palace. The Praetorian Guard, on the other hand, was stationed only in Rome.⁶⁷

61 See Bockmuehl (1998, 26) for more comprehensive list. Deissmann (1909, 229–230) was probably among the first to argue for an Ephesian imprisonment and to suggest that Paul's imprisonment letters were written from there.

62 For Jewett (1970a, 364) this is the most important argument in favor of Ephesus.

63 Bruce 2011, 15; Sanders 2015, 583.

64 Sanders 2015, 582–583.

65 Bockmuehl 1998, 27.

66 Hawthorne 1983, xl.

67 Fee 1995, 34–35. Some have argued for the presence of an imperial guard in Ephesus on the grounds of three inscriptions referring to a *praetorianus* found in the vicinity of Ephesus. Bruce, however, argues that the inscription refers to a *former* member of the

Furthermore, the letter lacks any mention of the collection, even though Paul was actively engaging in it at the time (1 Cor 16:1).⁶⁸

Rome is the most traditional and long-standing hypothesis for locating Philippians.⁶⁹ It is also opted for by most recent scholars, such as Fee (1995), Bockmuehl (1998), Schnelle (2005), Witherington (2011), and Holloway (2017). According to Luke, Paul was, at the end of his career, imprisoned in Rome, where he enjoyed considerable freedom while having to wait for a long time to be tried before the Caesar (Acts 28:30). This fits perfectly with what is reflected in Philippians (point 6).⁷⁰ Furthermore, the references to the *praetorium* and “Caesar’s household” (4:22)⁷¹ fall into place easily. No mention of the collection would be required, since it would have been delivered already. In favor of a later date (suitable in both the Roman and the Caesarean solutions) it has also been noted that the term “ἐπίσκοπος”, found only here (1:1) in the authentic Pauline letters, reflects a later development and anticipates the formation of church leadership reflected in the Pastorals.⁷² Furthermore, Paul’s eschatological thinking is different from his earlier correspondence: while in 1 Thess 4:15 and 1 Cor 15:52 Paul still expects to be alive at the coming of Christ, in Philippians he expects to die and to be resurrected “from the dead” (3:10–11).

Two problems remain in the Roman solution. Firstly, the distance between Rome and Philippi was considerable (1300 km, with a 40 days’ travel one way). This reduces the likelihood of frequent travel back and forth. However, this does not seem as problematic considering the length of Paul’s imprisonment, as well as the excellent routes (both sea and land) between these cities.⁷³ The second problem concerns Paul’s travel plans. Before heading for Jerusalem for

praetorian guard who now acts as a police. Thus, he finds no evidence in the inscription of a praetorian guard in Ephesus (Bruce 2011, 12. See also Bockmuehl 1998, 28).

68 Aejmelaesus (1983, 315 n. 2) has proposed that this is because the Macedonian churches participated in the collection only after Paul’s Ephesian stay.

69 The solution is already put forth in the second-century Marcionite prologue to Philippians.

70 Reumann (2008, 14) confuses the nature of the imprisonment and its possible outcome, when stating that the serious nature of the imprisonment, with a possible death sentence, does not fit the “freedom without hindrance” depicted for Paul’s Roman imprisonment by Acts.

71 While this term can refer to any “slaves and freedmen who constituted the clerical and senior administrative levels of the civil service” (and thus be found also in Ephesus and Caesarea), the passage has more rhetorical weight if Paul is writing from the capital of the Empire (Bockmuehl 1998, 28, 30).

72 Schnelle 2005, 368.

73 Bockmuehl 1998, 30–31. The five trips that Philippians is sometimes taken to necessitate can also be reduced to fewer trips in a shorter time-span (Bockmuehl 1998, 172). Reumann (2008, 7) is excessive with the trips in his chart, which is further complicated by the assumption of three letter-fragments.

the last time, Paul had made plans to continue to Spain and westward (Rom 15:24, 29). In Philippians he wishes to visit Macedonia and Philippi upon release. Some have suggested that the hardships of the last couple of years could have made Paul change his mind.⁷⁴ Others suggest he wanted simply to postpone the original plan in order to visit Philippi first.⁷⁵ As a further (although minor) complicating factor, it should also be mentioned that Acts does not mention the presence of Timothy in Rome.

In the Caesarean solution Paul is assumed to have written Philippians during his imprisonment in Caesarea before having been sent to Rome. The solution has had some supporters, although less than the other two. The proponents include Lohmeyer (1954 [1928]), Kümmel (1975), and Hawthorne (1983).

Points 1, 2, and 6, concerning the nature of Paul's imprisonment, again make a good fit. Luke relates a long period (Acts 24:27) of imprisonment in Caesarea with considerable liberty for contact with outsiders (Acts 24:23). In Philippians Paul's situation seems to be one where he has already been given a hearing once. Paul has defended himself (ἀπολογία, Phil. 1:7), but has remained in prison. This fits perfectly with what Luke tells of the proceedings in Caesarea. Paul defended himself in the presence of the governor Felix (Acts 24:20–21) but was still kept in prison for two years.⁷⁶ As for the *praetorium*, it should be noted that this is the exact word Luke uses of the place where Paul is incarcerated ("*praetorium* of Herod", 23:35). The "household of Caesar" would then refer to "those administrative personnel involved in the governing of Judaea from Caesarea".⁷⁷ Also the absence of any mention of the collection is, again, understandable, while the presence of Timothy remains uncertain. It will be suggested in this study that Paul in Phil 1:15–18a refers to Jewish Christian preachers with connections to Jerusalem and suggests they have caused him some form of trouble in his imprisonment (ch. 5). This, too, fits the Caesarean solution better than the other two.

The Caesarean hypothesis has some advantage over the Roman one, since Paul's plan to visit the Philippians upon release is no longer difficult to explain. Paul could well want to visit this church of his on his way west – no change

74 This is how e.g. Fee (1995, 36), Dunn (2009, 1014 n. 25), and Holloway (2017, 23) see it. Bruce (2011, 14) points out that Paul's travel plans were never inflexible (cf. 2 Cor 1:15–2:1).

75 Schnelle 2005, 369.

76 It seems that after this time Paul was, contrary to Luke's depiction, actually sentenced to death. This, in turn, accounts for his petition to Caesar. Philippians reflects Paul's fear of a negative sentence and an uncertainty of his fate. Admittedly, the same fear could issue when facing the Roman court.

77 Hawthorne 1983, xli.

of overall plan is needed.⁷⁸ On the other hand, the journey from Caesarea to Philippi is even longer than the one between Philippi and Rome. However, one might say that the whole matter of distances and number of trips has been exaggerated. Even if five trips back and forth from Caesarea to Philippi is to be assumed, all of them could be fitted into a time-span of two years.⁷⁹ In conclusion, there is considerably stronger evidence in support of either the Roman or Caesarean solution than the Ephesian one. Out of the two better ones, the Caesarean solution is preferable.

The study of Philippians has also long been complicated by the assumption that the letter is a compilation of two or three separate letter fragments, which address different situations.⁸⁰ In the so-called two-letter hypothesis, Phil 3 (with varying demarcations, cf. below) is considered as originally separate from the rest of the letter. A three-letter hypothesis goes even further, suggesting that also verses 4:10–20 represent an originally separate Thank you note⁸¹ or a receipt of the gift Paul had received from the Philippians.⁸² The following overview will deal with the questions relating to Phil 3, since it is more significant to this study.⁸³ The main arguments for disunity of Phil 3 may be summarized as follows:

1. The sudden change in tone at the junction of Phil 2 and 3. Especially the summons to “rejoice in the Lord” (3:1) does not seem to fit the immediately following stark warning in 3:2.⁸⁴ 2. Verse 3:1b sounds like a concluding remark,

78 Hawthorne 1983, xlii.

79 Hawthorne 1983, xlii.

80 For a brief history of the unity question, see Reumann 2008, 9.

81 As for the supposedly separate Thank you letter (letter A), a few remarks will suffice in this connection, since the question is not central to the topic of this study. The main reason for considering the passage as separate has been that a “thank you” for a received gift does not seem in its expected place in the current letter. It would more commonly have been expressed at the beginning of the letter. There are basically two reasons why this should not be considered a problem. Firstly, Paul may well be referring to the gift already in 1:5, when he thanks God for the Philippians’ participation (κοινωνία) in the gospel (cf. 4:15). Furthermore, Alexander (1989, 97–98) has provided several examples of Hellenistic letters where gratitude is expressed at the end of the letter (for further examples see also Wansink 1996, 129–132). Finally, Becker (1993, 309–310) has pointed out that the references to Epaphroditus (2:19–30, 4:18) are most naturally understood as belonging to the same letter. On these grounds this study proceeds from the assumption that 4:10–20 is not an originally separate letter.

82 Betz 2015, 11.

83 For a full list of both two- and three-letter proponents up to 1985 see Garland 1985, 141–142.

84 Sanders (2015, 576–577) takes this up as a major factor for doubting the unity of the letter. He, however, remains uncertain about the question (580): “There may be portions of different letters within the document as we have it ... but everything in the letter was written by Paul and directed to Philippi”.

if the word τὸ λοιπὸν is taken to mean “finally” and the word χαίρετε to mean “good bye.”⁸⁵ Accordingly, it has been taken to mark the ending of a letter, to which Phil 3 has later been attached. This is supported by the notion that Paul frequently mentions his further travel plans and companions at the end of the letter (here 2:19–30).⁸⁶ In fact, verse 3:1 is taken to be better understood in a closer connection to 4:4, which also includes an exhortation to rejoice (or actually two). 3. The third, and most interesting argument for our purposes, has to do with the various texts that deal with opposition. The harsh tone of Phil 3 is considered incongruous with the subtler and vaguer passages in the same letter (1:15–18a, 2:15 and 1:27–30). Some have proposed that when Paul wrote the assumedly earlier letter to the Philippians (with Phil 1) he had less knowledge on the opponents than when writing the later letter composed of Phil 3.⁸⁷ 4. Furthermore, Polycarp (Pol. *Phil.* 3:2) has been taken to offer external evidence for more than one letter to the Philippians, since he mentions Paul having sent *letters* to the Philippians while he was absent.⁸⁸

The following counter-arguments, along with some additional arguments, have been offered for the unity of the letter. 1. Some have attempted to mitigate the harshness of tone in 3:2,⁸⁹ but this exercise seems redundant. The change in tone is certainly there. The question is rather, if this justifies the assumption of a separate letter-fragment. Several explanations have been offered for the change in tone.⁹⁰ A more complete answer to this will be provided just below in this study, but it is in order to point out here that even though the tone may change, it does not mean that Paul wrote rashly and in a sudden burst of anger. The text in Phil 3 is well structured and thought-out and it seems reasonable to assume that the angry tone was a planned device to catch the attention

85 Thus, Beare 1959, 100, 145–146; Rahtjen 1969, 171.

86 Garland 1985, 145.

87 Müller-Bardorff 1957/58, 591; Schmithals 1972, 73–74.

88 Reumann 2008, 8–9. As external evidence, it has also been suggested that the letter to the Laodiceans used a version of Philippians that lacked 3:2–4:3 and 4:10–20 (Sellew 1994, 20). Furthermore, the *Catalogus Sinaiticus* lists Philippians twice and the ninth-century historian Georgius Syncellus mentions “the first epistle to the Philippians” (see Holloway 2017, 11).

89 Mackay 1961, 161–170. One form of mitigation is offered by the several attempts to read the words βλέπετε in a milder manner as mere exhortations to “take notice of ...” etc. See below for complete discussion.

90 Vincent (1985, xxxiii) and Hawthorne (1983, xxxi) have claimed that changes in tone are part and parcel of informal, personal letters such as Philippians. Lightfoot (1900, 69–70) has suggested that the change in tone may be the result of a break in the writing process during which Paul received bad news.

of the audience.⁹¹ It will also be suggested below that verse 3:1b serves as an introduction to what is about to follow in 3:2, which softens the alleged break. The finer points on the exact interpretation of verses 3:1–3:2 will be discussed below and in ch. 5.

As for the interpretation of the alleged letter-conclusion (point 2) it has been suggested that the words τὸ λοιπὸν and χαίρετε should be read “as for the rest/so then”⁹² and “rejoice”.⁹³ Nor does connecting the verses 3:1 and 4:4 eventually seem more “natural”. At least they cannot be melted together as they stand: three exhortations to rejoice in the span of two verses are simply not believable.⁹⁴ And even if the redactor is assumed to have used a repeating device of some sort, this would also be strange, since this kind of technique is usually used differently.⁹⁵ The repetition would more normally occur at the end of the original text, after which it would be repeated at the beginning of the interpolation.

As for point 3., those in favor of the unity of the letter have answered this problem of harsher and more lenient references to opponents by simply posing that the same opponents are not in question in the different passages. This is, perhaps the most common solution. This study will engage extensively in this question and, ultimately, propose a somewhat different stance which will, for its part, support the original unity of the letter.

Not too much should be read into Polycarp’s mention (4.). Paul Hartog has shown that, in addition to Phil, Polycarp may mean Paul’s letters to other churches, since they were regarded as generally applicable from a very early date. Furthermore, it was conventional to refer to “letters” (in plural) in contrast to personal presence.⁹⁶

At least the following further arguments in favor of unity have also been taken up: 5. A factor seen as diminishing the credibility of interpolation theories

91 Watson 1988, 86–87, suggests that “the tonal shift is designed to regain audience attention and receptivity which have been diverted to other than the main deliberation by the *digressio* in 2:17–30.” Watson sees here in action the following rhetorical devices: *iracundia* (flying into anger), *laesio* (a hard-hitting oratorical attack) and *improvisum* (an unexpected turn of expression). All of these illustrate, in Watson’s opinion that “the tonal shift in 3:2 was not at all foreign to the rhetoric of Paul’s day, but rather was conventional”.

92 The words τὸ λοιπὸν can function in many ways. They can act as a simple transitional particle introducing a fresh point in the process of thought (e.g. “and so” or “moreover”, “well then”) as in 2 Thess 3:1 and 1 Cor 7:29, or introduce a logical conclusion (Thrall 1962, 28; Witherington 2011, 186).

93 Fee 1995, 289.

94 Linko 2008, 161.

95 Linko 2008, 161.

96 Hartog 2002, 223–225.

is that nothing close to a consensus has been established on where to detect the exact beginning and end of the alleged interpolation. A few examples:

Müller-Bardoff (1957)	3:2–21, 4:8–9
Rahtjen (1960)	3:1–4:9
Gnilka (1968)	3:1b–4:1, 8–9
Linko (2008)	3:2–21
Bormann (2012)	3:2–4:1, 8f.
(For further examples, see table 1)	

6. Significant semantic and lexical parallels can be found between the passages 1:18b–2:18 and 3:1–21. The most significant lexical parallels include the following: κέρδος (1:21/3:7), πολιτευ- (1:27/3:20), ἀπώλεια (1:28/3:19), κοινωνία (2:1/3:10), σκοπέω (2:4/3:17), μορφή (2:6,7/3:10), σχῆμα (2:7/3:21), ταπεινός (2:3/3:21). The following thematic parallels can also be found: humility (2:1–11/3:1–11), race motif (2:16/3:12–16), exhortation to imitate (1:30, 2:11/3:17). One of the most important thematic parallels is the theme of emptying (2:5–11/3:10). In fact, it seems clear that Paul's depiction of emptying himself from his Jewish credentials is quite consciously modeled after the depiction of Christ in the so-called Kenosis hymn (2:6–11).⁹⁷ Furthermore, it has been shown that many of the themes dealt with later (including in Phil 3) are introduced by Paul already in the thanksgiving part (1:3–11) of the letter.⁹⁸ However, attempts to prove the unity of the letter by means of establishing rhetorically believable outlines of the letter seem of little value. A rhetorical analysis always starts off with an assumption of a uniform rhetorical unit, which makes arguments for unity circular.⁹⁹

97 For a list of further lexical and semantic connections see Bloomquist 1993, 102–103 and Holloway 2017, 18–19. Dunn (2009, 1026–1027) offers a useful fifteen point list of how and where the hymn is reflected throughout the letter. Wright (2003, 226–228) also builds on the close connection between the hymn and Phil 3. Linko's (2008, 164) suggestion that Paul could pick up the same themes and lexicon in the next letter, does not seem believable in light of the complicated and elaborated nature of this motif.

98 Jewett 1970b, 40–53.

99 Linko 2008, 157. See also Reumann 2008, 9–10. The actions of an alleged redactor are sometimes taken up as further evidence for a singular letter. Fee (1995, 22) asks: "If one has difficulty with Paul's having created the unmanageable 'seams' in our letter, how is it easier to imagine a ... redactor to have done so? Why did he leave the 'Finally, rejoice in the Lord' at 3:1? Or why did he not eliminate them in 4:4 and 8? And why 3:2–21 at *this* point in the compilation of letters?" Fee points out that the aim of the redactors was generally to make the letters more understandable and readable, not the other way around

Finally, it needs to be said that, from a methodological stand-point, the initial assumption when studying Philippians should always be that it is of one piece. This simpler starting point warrants questioning only in the appearance of notable evidence to the contrary. Since the suggestions for such evidence seem quite easily refuted, this study will proceed from the assumption that Philippians is not a compilation of two or more letter fragments, but a single, whole letter. The main part of the study will produce results that further justify this position. These will pertain specially to point 3. above, as it will be argued that the same group of opponents is in view in Phil 1:15–18a and Phil 3.¹⁰⁰

3 The History and Current Situation of the Philippian Church

It is not necessary here to rehearse the history of the city of Philippi at great length.¹⁰¹ It is more significant to shed light on the ethnic, cultural, political, and religious situation of the city in the middle of the first century. Perhaps the quintessential feature of Philippi was its Roman character.¹⁰² Since the victory of Octavian and Antony over Brutus and Cassius near Philippi in 42 BCE, the city had enjoyed the benefits of being a Roman colony, inhabited by veterans of the Roman wars.¹⁰³ The position of colony meant that the same jurisdiction

(similarly, Bockmuehl 1998, 25). But the argument is problematic since it essentially suggests that the work of redactors cannot generally be detected from the text.

100 A great amount of time, energy and print has been devoted in modern scholarship to solving the unity of Philippians. I hope that this study will, for its part, contribute to removing the question from among those that need to be addressed in every study of the letter.

101 The area was first inhabited by Thracian tribes, who benefited from the gold – and silver mines in the area. In 360 BC Greeks from the island of Thasos founded a colony there and named it Crenides. Soon after, however, Philip II the king of Macedon conquered the colony and named the city after himself (356 BC) (Portefaix 1988, 59–60). In the second century BC Macedonia underwent three wars with Rome, and was eventually annexed to the Empire as a province (Bruce 1979, 337–338). Under Roman control, Macedonia was divided into four parts. Despite the textual problem (for a fuller exposition Tellbe 2001, 217), it seems Luke in Acts 16:12 means to inform that Philippi was “a city of the first district of Macedonia” (thus Bruce 1979, 340; Bockmuehl 1997, 13). Not like NRSV: “a leading city of the district of Macedonia”, or Fee (1995, 25): “the leading city of that district of Macedonia”. Tellbe 2001, 217–218 suggests “a first city of the district of Macedonia”, the wording denoting “the preeminence of the city” in a sense of civic pride (technically Thessalonica was the capital of Macedonia).

102 Portefaix 1988, 64: “Philippi seems to have had an entirely Roman stamp at that time”; Hellerman 2005, 66–67: “Only in Italy could one find a Roman settlement even comparable to Philippi”.

103 Bruce 1979, 340; Tellbe 2001, 212; Reumann 2008, 3. When Octavian later won Antony in the battle of Actium, he settled several of Antony’s disbanded troops in Philippi and

(*ius Italicum*) was effective in Philippi as in the city of Rome.¹⁰⁴ The administration was also arranged in Roman style: there were the usual Roman officials such as *duumviri*, *quaestores*, *lictors*, and *aediles*, along with the official priests of the Roman imperial cult (*augur*, *pontifices*, *flamines*).¹⁰⁵ The official language of the colony was Latin.¹⁰⁶ It is estimated that around two or three thousand Roman veterans lived in the city.¹⁰⁷ The rest of the population consisted of the original Thracian inhabitants, along with a number of Greeks, who had come to Philippi at different times and from different locations.¹⁰⁸ The position of the city as a Roman colony was considered a great honor and privilege.¹⁰⁹ It also meant that a majority of the inhabitants were Roman citizens.¹¹⁰

As for the religious life in Philippi, the official Roman state religions figured prominently. The imperial cult seems to have been especially significant, not least because the Philippians had a long tradition of ruler cult stemming from the times of Philip II of Macedonia.¹¹¹ Two buildings unearthed from the forum can be identified as imperial cult temples, and there is an inscription revealing a priestess of Livia Augusta from the first century.¹¹² According to Joseph Hellerman, the imperial cult was collective and public in nature, and held a social function to “reinforce in the public arena the ‘fixed order’ of the colony’s social hierarchy”.¹¹³ In other words, the elite had more invested in the cult than the non-elite, and those eager to rise in hierarchy would probably incorporate the cult in their aspirations. Other religious elements abounded

renamed the colony after himself as *Colonia Augusta Iulia Philippensis* (Portefaix 1988, 69; Tellbe 2001, 212).

104 Portefaix 1988, 64–65; Tellbe 2001, 213.

105 Portefaix 1988, 65; Tellbe 2001, 213; Cohick 2013, 169.

106 Greek remained influential, too, as the language of e.g. oriental cults (Portefaix 1988, 69). All the remaining Philippian inscriptions from the first and second centuries are, however, in Latin (Tellbe 2001, 213 n. 16).

107 Oakes 1995, 73; Tellbe 2001, 213.

108 Some of the Greeks were descendants of the first Greek Thasian colonists and of those Macedonians that Philip II brought to the area. Some were more recent Greek immigrants mainly from Asia Minor. These seem to have held a position superior to the older Greek population (Portefaix 1988, 67).

109 Tellbe 2001, 213.

110 All citizens of Philippi were also granted Roman citizenship (Tellbe 2001, 214).

111 Tellbe 2001, 214 (esp. n. 22)–217, relying on the insights of Bormann (1995, 32–67), who has correctly emphasized the significance of the ruler cult in Philippi. Similarly, Hellerman 2005, 80.

112 Oakes 2005, 305–306; Hellerman 2005, 80–83; Pilhofer 2009, 2–3; Cohick 2013, 169–170.

113 According to Hellerman (2005, 81) two honorific offices, those of *flamines* and *sexviri Augustales* existed in relation to the cult of the emperor in Philippi. Members of the first class could only be Roman citizens from birth, while the latter were freedmen.

as well.¹¹⁴ The Thracians venerated, for example, their Thracian Horseman, the Thracian Bacchus and Bendis (a Thracian form of the Greek Artemis).¹¹⁵ There was worship of Greek gods, such as Artemis, Apollos, and Dionysos, as well as a number of oriental cults (Cybele, Isis).¹¹⁶ The social and hierarchical significance of the various cults is highlighted by the way Thracian cults recede and Romans become dominant when moving from the vicinities into the actual city.¹¹⁷

It is remarkable that there seems to have been no significant Jewish community in Philippi. There are no archaeological traces of Jewish communities, synagogues, or related inscriptions.¹¹⁸ Luke's story of Paul's initial visit to Philippi is largely consistent with this. According to Luke, Paul and his companions find only a group of God-fearing women outside the city walls (Acts 16:13).¹¹⁹ This suggests there were not enough Jewish men in the city to constitute a standard synagogue community.¹²⁰ Also, while it is Luke's habit to report about the hostility of the Jewish communities in Macedonia and Greece, no such mention is made in connection to Philippi.¹²¹

Paul himself reveals very little of his first visit to Philippi. In 1 Thessalonians 2:2 he reminds the Thessalonians that before meeting them he had just "suffered and been shamefully maltreated" in Philippi. The same occasion is probably in Paul's mind in Phil 1:29, when he reminds the Philippians of the struggle they witnessed. Luke's depiction in Acts 16:11–40 is lengthier. It also contains the first so-called "We-section" in Acts (16:10b–17). While Luke's historical reliability is a matter of debate and caution, it is possible that especially the

114 See Hellerman (2005, 84) for different emphases in recent scholarship on Thracian and Greek vs. Roman elements in the religion of Philippi at the turn of the Common Era. Hellerman takes the middle position between Bormann (1995) who stresses Roman religion and Pilhofer (1995), who all but neglects the Roman ruler cult.

115 Portefaix 1988, 70 n. 113.

116 Portefaix 1988, 70 n. 114 and 115.

117 Hellerman 2005, 85.

118 Portefaix 1988, 73.

119 Luke's use of the word *proseukhe* instead of *synagoge* has raised discussion. In the first century BC a synagogue building could be referred to with either word (Tellbe 2001, 220 n. 47). However, Luke elsewhere systematically uses *synagoge* for synagogue (Acts 17:1, 10, 17; 18:4 etc.). *Proseukhe* generally means for him the act of praying (1:14; 2:42; 3:1 etc.). Whether Luke could here use it in the sense of a synagogue building is made more believable by the possibility that the passage is part of an outside (the We-) source (see below). However, the likelihood of a building is low, as there is no archaeological or other textual support for this.

120 Bruce 1979, 341. A *minyān* would require 10 males.

121 Tellbe 2001, 221.

We-sections contain more reliable material.¹²² For this study the main questions of interest are those, which reveal something of the ethnic make-up of the church and of the attitudes in Philippi towards Jews and/or Christ-believers.

It was already noted above that there seem to have been no Jewish synagogue community in Philippi. Accordingly, it seems that the local Christ-believing community was predominantly Gentile.¹²³ This is further supported by the Latin and Greek names of the known members of the community (Epaphroditus, Euodia, Syntykhe, Clement).¹²⁴ As will become evident in the analysis below, the Gentile background of the community is also reflected in much of the argumentative material of the letter. It explains why Paul makes exceptionally little reference to the Scriptures.¹²⁵ Also, Paul's statements concerning Jewish identity markers suggest a real distance from which the Gentile Philippians view Judaism.

According to Luke, Paul and his companions exorcize a slave girl possessed by a clairvoyant python spirit and rouse the anger of the girl's owners over the lost means of profit (Acts 16:16–19). Paul and Silas are turned over to the city magistrates with a complaint that they are disturbing the peace of the city (ἐκταράσσουσιν ... τὴν πόλιν) and – being Jews (Ἰουδαῖοι ὑπάρχοντες) – advocate (καταγγέλλουσιν) customs (ἔθνη) that are unlawful for the Roman citizens of Philippi to adopt (παραδέχεσθαι, ποιεῖν, 16:20–21). The text clearly conveys that

122 Thus e.g. Bockmuehl 1997, 12. There are four so-called We-sections in Acts. Verses 16:10b–17 comprise the first one (the others are 20:5–15; 21:1–18; 27:1–28:16). The three most common solutions to the sudden change in personal pronouns have been 1) that it is a rhetorical device in order to provide credibility, 2) that it indicates Luke's use of a first-hand source by someone else or 3) that it signifies Luke's use of his own first-hand source. It seems very unlikely that Luke is using his own diary/source. Given how much Luke's image of Paul differs from the Paul we find in his own letters, it is difficult to imagine that these men knew each other personally. Also, this means a very early date would have to be assumed for Acts (both assumptions, however, accepted by e.g. Tellbe 2001, 17 n. 60 and 221 n. 49). The most likely explanation for the We-sections is either Luke's own rhetorical usage or the use of some other source, which was written consistently in first person either for stylistic purposes or because that person actually accompanied Paul for a time. For a rhetorical solution, see Robbins (1978, 215–242), who argues that Luke applies a known stylistic device of the Hellenistic sea journey genre. For a good overview of the central questions pertaining to the We-sections, see Witherington 1998, 480–486.

123 Tellbe 2001, 223.

124 Tellbe 2001, 223.

125 Witherington 2011, 11–12. 1 Thess, Phlm, and Phil are the only letters by Paul which contain no explicit quotations of the OT, only allusions (such as a few “succinct syntactic constructions” in Phil, see Bormann 2012, 226).

Paul and Silas are not identified on the basis of their belief in Christ but are viewed as Jews.¹²⁶ This is quite realistic for such an early date.

But do the absence of a synagogue community in Philippi and Luke's report of the accusations against Paul and Silas testify to an *unusually anti-Jewish atmosphere* in Philippi? This does not seem to be the case. As for the absence of a synagogue community, it has been suggested that Philippi followed the recent edict by Claudius and expelled Jews from their city as well.¹²⁷ If this were the case, we would expect archaeological and/or epigraphical evidence of Jewish settlement both before and after the alleged period of expulsion, but no such evidence exists.¹²⁸ It is more likely that the reason behind the lack of a Jewish community is less dramatic: because Jews were exempt from the army, they were naturally underrepresented in a city where the population largely consisted of army veterans.¹²⁹

The accusations against Paul and Silas do not necessarily represent unusual nervousness toward Jews either. They were not accused because of their identity as Jews per se, but of stepping out of the boundaries of acceptable Jewish behavior.¹³⁰ Firstly, they were accused of *disturbing the peace*, that is, of being "politically subversive and a threat the *pax Romana*".¹³¹ This is consistent with the common Roman attitude according to which the Jews were left alone unless they became somehow conspicuous and drew (negative) attention to themselves. Nor do the accusations regarding promotion of unlawful customs reflect anything more than a standard objection by Romans to any form of expansiveness or missionary effort by the Jews.¹³² That having been said, the evidence simultaneously suggests that the Roman populace of Philippi could easily be provoked to act against Jews.

It was decided above that the most likely date for Philippians is towards the end of Paul's missionary career. Accordingly, the letter is written either from Paul's Caesarean or Roman imprisonment at the turn or at the beginning of the

126 Fitzmyer 1998, 567.

127 Kistemaker 1990, 589.

128 The first epigraphical evidence of a Philippian synagogue dates to the 4th–5th century CE (Pilhofer 1995, 232–233).

129 Portefaix 1988, 73 (esp. n. 146).

130 The participial Ἰουδαῖοι ὑπάρχοντες is open to different interpretations. A concessive interpretation emphasizes that the identity of the men as Jews was not a problem in itself ("although they are Jews"). If taken as a simple statement ("they are Jews and proclaim ..."), it may reflect an appeal to common prejudice against Jews.

131 Tellbe 2001, 235.

132 Tellbe (2001, 235–236) notes that there was no official Roman ruling against Jewish proselytizing, but it would have been easy to appeal to a common prejudice against Jewish beliefs as detrimental *superstitio*, which should be prevented from spreading.

60s. Acts gives the impression that Paul visited Philippi one or two more times between the founding visit and the journey to Jerusalem: Acts 20:1–2 reports more vaguely of Paul traveling through the regions of Macedonia southward to Greece; on the way back from Greece Philippi is explicitly mentioned (Acts 20:6).

The current situation of the Philippians is taken up in the letter when Paul for the first time moves from recounting his own situation to their affairs in 1:27–2:18. In this connection a reference is made to some “opponents” (τῶν ἀντικειμένων), although no details of their actions are offered. Rhetorically, Paul seems mainly interested in encouraging the addressees by promising them salvation for standing firm and fearless (μὴ πτυρόμενοι) in the face of opposition. He also offers legitimation to the Philippians’ hardship by insisting that it is “for Christ” and a gift of grace (ὑμῖν ἐχαρίσθη ... πάσχειν).

Considerable evidence suggests that the opposition refers to the Philippian civic administration and/or the local populace, and not the same Jewish Christ-believing group as in Phil 3.¹³³ Firstly, Paul opens the section by exhorting the Philippians to conduct their lives worthy of the gospel of Christ despite opposition. The verb πολιτεύομαι is a political term which means “to live as a good citizen of some realm”.¹³⁴ Although the word occasionally does appear in connection with Jewish lifestyle,¹³⁵ here the Philippian colonial setting and the surrounding textual evidence makes it more likely that Paul is referring to a collision between a Christ-believing lifestyle and Roman citizenship, placing the former above the latter.¹³⁶

Even more notably, in 1:30 Paul insists that the Philippians are undergoing the same struggle (τὸν αὐτὸν ἀγῶνα) as they previously saw Paul go through and now hear of his present situation as well (οἶον εἶδετε ἐν ἐμοὶ καὶ νῦν ἀκούετε ἐν ἐμοί). The previous instance probably refers to the founding visit when Paul was beaten and jailed by the local Roman magistrates (Acts 16:19–24). His current situation was a similar one in the sense that he was again incarcerated by Romans and, this time, headed to a hearing by the imperial seat. While it has sometimes been suggested that the similarity between the situations of Paul

133 Bockmuehl 1997, 100–101; Tellbe 2001, 233: “the opposition consisted of an external threat from the surrounding civic community” (emphasis his).

134 Witherington 2011, 99.

135 Esth 8:12; 2 Macc 6:1; 11:25; Josephus, *Vit.* 12, Acts 23:1.

136 “Paul interposes a counter-citizenship” (Bockmuehl 1997, 98). Fee (1995, 162) offers a less contentious reading according to which Paul encourages the Philippians to “live in the Roman colony of Philippi as worthy citizens of your heavenly homeland”. The following talk of opponents, however, suggests a more polemical and dichotomizing meaning.

and the Philippians could be of a more general nature (perhaps just the theological fact that they were both “for Christ”), this does not sufficiently explain the emphatic use of the word “the same”.¹³⁷ Accordingly, it is most natural to assume that the opposition came from essentially the same facet. That Paul is not speaking of the same group as in Phil 3 is also supported by the evident presence in Philippi of the opponents mentioned in 1:27–30.

As for the specifics of the adversity, not much can be said with certainty. It is commonly suggested that the local Roman officials acted against the Philippian Christ-believers because they refused to participate in the cult of the emperor although they were not legally exempted from it.¹³⁸ But this view is too simplistic. It requires that in Philippi the Christ-believing community was regarded as something distinct from Jewish communities, which is not self-evident. Also, although the imperial cult may have been especially important in Philippi, it is still highly doubtful whether it served as a clear demarcation line.

Paul's frequent references to and legitimation of suffering have often led to the assumption that the Philippian church was facing tangible opposition and even physical hardship. Recently, however, it has been suggested by Peter Oakes that the suffering of the Philippians was mainly economic in nature – thus not a form of systematic, violent persecution.¹³⁹ He does not see in 1:27–2:4 any reference to the imperial cult, but understands 2:4 with its stress on mutual support in the Philippian Christ-believing community as the punch line of the passage.¹⁴⁰ As will be discussed further in ch. 7 Paul may have other reasons for stressing and even exaggerating the theme of suffering. Factors that call for reassessment of the historical severity of the Philippian situation include the following: 1. There are no reports of trouble with the local Philippian civic administration in connection with Paul's later visits to Philippi. 2. Paul gives no concrete details of actions against the Philippian church. There is no mention of trials, incarcerations, or dead members of the community. Rather, he speaks of “being startled” (πτυρόμενοι). 3. That Paul describes the Philippian Epaphroditus' physical illness in terms of martyrdom,¹⁴¹ also reveals that there were no actual Philippian martyrs in sight. Furthermore, there may have been

¹³⁷ Tellbe 2001, 233 n. 99.

¹³⁸ Fee 1995, 197.

¹³⁹ Oakes 2001, 89–96. According to Osiek (2000, 50) the Philippians may chiefly have suffered from “shunning, public embarrassment, non-recognition of personal honor and status, discrimination in the patronage system” and the like.

¹⁴⁰ Oakes 2005, 319.

¹⁴¹ There is a deliberate connection between the description of Christ's obedience unto death in 2:8 (μέχρι θανάτου) and Epaphroditus' serious illness in 2:30 (μέχρι θανάτου).

a greater risk among the Philippian Christ-believers of “pro-Roman than anti-Roman conduct”.¹⁴² If this was the case, Paul would have good reason to exaggerate Roman hostility and to stress the incompatibility of Christ-believing and Roman/Philippian identities to create and uphold a distinct group identity for the Philippian believers.

As will be suggested in the analysis below, Paul’s argumentation in Philippians indicates that the Philippian Christ-believing community did not perceive itself so much in terms of Jewish tradition or identity. On the contrary, there seems to be a certain distance to Jewish tradition, which, for example, makes it possible for Paul to exploit common Gentile stereotypes of Jews. As for how the outsiders viewed the community, it is difficult to determine whether they were (mal)treated as Jews or already regarded as a distinct group of Christ-followers. According to Luke, Paul and Silas were classified and viewed as Jews during the founding visit in ca. 50 CE. The letter to the Philippians, however, is written some ten years later, and in 64 CE Nero would already be able to single out Christians for persecution. Accordingly, it is possible, but by no means certain, that a distinction was already made in Philippi. If a distinction was made and the problems were of official nature, the Christ-believing community could have improved its position by adopting an unequivocally Jewish identity through circumcision. If outsiders viewed the community as Jews, the current problems probably arose from prevailing prejudices against *Jews* by the Philippian inhabitants. In this case it is less certain whether official recognition of the local Christ-believers as Jews would have helped the situation. On the contrary, the most beneficial choice could have been to emphasize the distinctiveness of the Christ-believing and Jewish communities and identify more strongly with a Roman/Philippian identity.

Paul, in fact, seems to combat different threats in the letter, including a possible interest by the Philippians to identify too closely with the Roman society. A central concern of his is the possibility that Gentile Christ-believers circumcise themselves and take on a Jewish identity. While it remains unclear how much it would have helped the Philippian community in terms of social security (if they even needed it so much), alignment with Jewish identity could be tempting for other, less tangible reasons as well. As the SIA stresses, valuable social identifiers come in many forms. Simply identifying the believers with an ancient and serious tradition could boost group identity.¹⁴³ There is no

¹⁴² Witherington 2011, 104 n. 27.

¹⁴³ Tellbe (2001, 262–263) makes a distinction between *theological* and *sociological* reasons for the attractiveness of the message of the Jewish Christ-believing opponents.

categorical need to provide a direct social or political demand in the Philippian end for Paul's response in the letter. Paul is concerned with constructing and defining for the addressees an identity which is distinct and positive in relation to both Roman and Jewish emphases. In this project, not only the situation of the Philippians matters, but also Paul's own previous and current experiences, perhaps even his awareness of the possibility of a wider readership for the letter.

PART 3

Paul and the Jerusalem Community



Paul and the Jerusalem Community Before Philippians

1 Introduction and the Question of Sources

The present chapter will focus on establishing the relationship between Paul and the Jerusalem Christ-believing community before the writing of Philippians. The four following historical incidents will serve as windows and points of entry into the question:

1. The Jerusalem meeting¹
2. The Antioch incident
3. The Galatian crisis
4. Paul's last visit to Jerusalem

The Jerusalem meeting is usually dated to the end of the 40s CE, with the so-called Antioch incident in close temporal vicinity. The precise contents and relative dating of these events will be discussed below. Both events precede the Galatian crisis – Paul relates them in his letter to the Galatians. It will be argued that the Galatian crisis took place as a natural corollary to these preceding events and essentially involved the same characters and points of disagreement. Finally, it will be suggested that the disagreements between Paul and the Jerusalem community continued (and sharpened) until the time of Paul's last visit to Jerusalem. The result will be an overall view into the relationship between Paul and the leadership of the Jerusalem Christ-believing community in the time preceding Philippians.

In terms of historical sources, two sets of material are traditionally considered: the authentic letters of Paul, mainly the letter to the Galatians, and Acts. The Jerusalem meeting and the Antioch incident are described or at least somehow reflected in both. As for the Galatian crisis, Acts contains no reference to it. On the other hand, the events surrounding Paul's last visit to Jerusalem must be reconstructed mainly based on Acts. Although Philippians does not offer concrete information about this event, I suggest that it covertly refers to it and that the letter reflects the situation after the visit as reconstructed from Acts.

1 I choose the term "meeting" instead of the more common "council" in order to leave the nature of the event open. It is likely that Luke is responsible for the impression of a high-profile, organized council (Pervo 2006, 80). Paul's depiction does not necessitate a similar profile.

It is clear that Paul's letters, as considerably earlier eyewitness accounts, should be treated as the primary source for historical investigation. However, their rhetorical nature poses a significant challenge. Paul recounts the Jerusalem meeting and the Antioch incident in a letter prompted by the Galatian crisis. This means that the situation in Galatia has a considerable effect on how the past is presented: the events are clearly not reported out of historical interest.² It is apparent that Paul's account, too, is colored by the "subjective aims" Baur criticizes Luke for.³

Acts, on the other hand, represents ancient historiography,⁴ which, on the surface, gives it an air of historical reliability. There are, however, serious caveats to reading Acts as a historical source for modern purposes. Firstly, the ideals and conventions of ancient historiography do not correspond to modern ones. Luke, like his contemporary historians, uses imaginative invention in creating not only speeches but narrative sections as well.⁵ Furthermore, it has proven difficult to specify the sources behind Luke's account.⁶ It is likely that Luke's writing is uneven in terms of historical reliability: at times he has good sources at his disposal, but at other times he relies on his own imagination.

For the present investigation the most significant question concerning the historical value of Acts has to do with whether Luke knew and used Paul's letters. For a considerable time scholarship has tended to answer the question in the negative.⁷ The assumption that Luke did not know (or use)⁸ Paul's letters arose largely as a reaction to the views of the Tübingen school, where it was simply assumed that Luke used the letters but actively sought to correct and neutralize their image of the early church to fit his own tendencies.⁹ Those who rejected Luke's dependence on Paul also appealed to the curious fact that Luke never mentions Paul's letters or even the fact that he wrote anything.¹⁰ More recent research has, however, succeeded in swinging the pendulum in the other

2 Betz 1979, 83.

3 Baur 1876, 5.

4 See Plümacher 2004, 1–14; Balch 1989, 343–361 for ancient historiography as the genre of Acts.

5 Plümacher 2004, 33–38.

6 See Pervo (2006, 5–11) for a summary of how the question of Luke's sources has been approached in previous scholarship.

7 Kümmel could in 1975 state that the negative view was "nearly universal" (1975, 186). Among the more recent ones who do not believe Luke used Paul's letters is C. K. Barrett 1976–77.

8 Knox (1966) argues that Luke knew Paul's letters, but chose not to use them.

9 Walker 1985, 3; Aejmelaeus 2011, 54–55.

10 Walker 1985, 3–4.

direction. It has been noted that Paul's letters were not "buried in obscurity"¹¹ during the decades following his death, and, consequently, were available for Luke.¹² Even more importantly, serious evidence has been put forth for literary dependence of Acts on Paul's letters.¹³ Among the most striking verbal agreements are, to mention only a few, the appearance of the rare verb *πορθέω* in connection with Paul's persecution activities (Gal 1:13; Acts 9:21), the only four appearances in the NT of the verb *συμπαλαμβάνω* in similar contexts in Gal 2:1; Acts 12:25 and 15:37–38, and verbal similarities in the story of Paul's escape from Damascus (*διὰ τοῦ τείχους* and *χαλάω* in 1 Cor 11:32–33; Acts 9:23–25).¹⁴

This means that, where this dependence is visible, Luke's changes are taken to be conscious and tendentious – much like Baur originally suggested. Luke is clearly "seeking to 'rehabilitate' Paul as a spokesman and champion of 'orthodox' Christianity", but must do this by directing attention away from Paul's letters "in the direction of the apostle's activities as missionary and martyr".¹⁵ Thus it is not surprising that Luke fails to mention Paul's letters or even his letter-writing. The readers' familiarity with the letters could uncover an uncomfortable truth and, consequently, risk Luke's idealized image of the early church.¹⁶ For the present investigation, it is notable that Luke is dependent on Paul's letters in his depiction of the Jerusalem meeting and the Antioch incident.¹⁷ This means that any reconstruction of these events should rest mainly on Paul's depiction. Although the possibility that Luke offers some additional information cannot be ruled out completely, his story can mainly serve as an example of how a first-century Christian historian could read and rewrite what he found in Paul's letters.

11 So O. Leppä (2011, 76–90), who demonstrates that already the writer of Col utilizes all the genuine letters of Paul (for detailed investigation, see O. Leppä 2003).

12 Aejmelaeus 2011, 56–59.

13 According to H. Leppä (2011, 92 n. 3), only proof of verbal agreement can finally solve the question.

14 For further examples of verbal dependence, see Walker 1985, 12–14; Pervo 2006, 51–147; Aejmelaeus 2011, 62–71; H. Leppä 2011, 92–99.

15 Walker 1985, 7.

16 Walker 1985, 7.

17 See Pervo 2006, 79–96.

2 The Antioch Incident

2.1 *Problems with the Traditional View*

Paul describes what has become known as the Antioch incident in Gal 2:11–14. In these verses Paul relates how Peter (called Cephas in the text) came to Antioch and withdrew from table-fellowship with the Gentiles. The story begins with Paul's vehement condemnation of Peter before even offering a description of the situation.¹⁸ Only after this does Paul give the reason behind his anger: Peter had eaten together (συνήσθινεν) with Gentiles (μετὰ τῶν ἐθνῶν) before certain men from James (τινας ἀπὸ Ἰακώβου) came to the scene, but then withdrawn. In the current reading of NA 28 Peter is described as withdrawing (ὑπέσπελλεν) and separating himself (ἀφώριζεν) from the Gentiles upon the arrival of the men (ὅτε δὲ ἦλθον). According to Paul all the other Jews and even Barnabas (2:13) followed the example. Paul insists they all acted hypocritically and accuses them of not walking straight according to “the truth of the gospel” (2:14). At the end of the depiction (2:14) Paul returns to the motif of the first verse, that is, the outright and public opposition to Peter. Paul accuses Peter of demanding from the Gentiles something even Peter himself had not lived up to. According to Paul Peter, a Jew by birth, had lived like a Gentile, but now “forced” (ἀναγκάζεις) the Gentiles to live like Jews (ιουδαῖζειν). In the following speech (2:15–21) Paul continues the subject. He points out that he himself and his Christ-believing brothers of Jewish descent (φύσει Ἰουδαῖοι, 2:15) have already previously concluded that righteousness does not come from the Law but only through faith in Christ (2:16). Thus, if Peter and the others were to rebuild something they have already torn down (the Law, that is), they would prove themselves transgressors (2:18).

Luke downplays the incident considerably. He repeats the falling out between Paul and Barnabas but strips it of theological content and severity: Paul and Barnabas simply quarrel about bringing John Mark along as a travel companion (Acts 15:36–40). Furthermore, Luke draws on Paul's depiction of the men from James who came to Antioch (Gal 2:12) when formulating Acts 15:1–2.¹⁹ Two observations are of special interest considering the following argument. Firstly, Luke uses the event, which in Gal is portrayed as triggering the Antioch incident as *background to the Jerusalem meeting*. Secondly, it is Luke who introduces the *explicit demand of circumcision* to this background.

18 “... Paul cannot wait to denounce Peter” (Dunn 1993, 117).

19 Verbal agreement is visible between Luke's κατελθόντες τινες ἀπὸ and Paul's ἐλθεῖν τινας ἀπὸ (Pervo 2006, 84–85).

In Galatians, the depiction of the Antioch incident immediately follows that of the Jerusalem meeting (Gal 2:1–10). Traditionally, this literary order is considered to reflect the historical order of events as well. However, there are serious text critical, literary, and historical reasons for problematizing this order. There is reason to believe that Gal 2:12a actually relates events that took place *before* the Jerusalem meeting (and ultimately led to it), while the rest of the story describes the situation after the meeting.

The main problems in reading Gal 2:11–14 as a description of a single historical event, which in its entirety took place after the Jerusalem meeting, are the following.

1. The traditional reading leaves the reasons behind the meeting essentially unexplained. In Gal 2:2 Paul insists that he went to Jerusalem “in response to a revelation”. While a mystical and subjective reasoning cannot be disqualified per se, the motivation for choosing this particular point of view here clearly springs from Paul’s need to emphasize his independence both from the Jerusalem and Antioch churches at the time of writing Galatians. But as such, the depiction lacks a plausible *social* occasion for the meeting.

2. The second problem is one of general credibility. Gerd Lüdemann is one of the few modern scholars who believes *all* the events depicted in 2:11–14 took place before the meeting. According to him, the kind of “naive commensality” depicted in 2:12a would have been possible only before the meeting.²⁰ Traditional views have attempted to solve this problem by suggesting that the question of commensality was not addressed (or at least not resolved) at the meeting.²¹ But given that questions revolving around food were quite central in first-century Judaism, an oversight like this seems unlikely.

3. As already Augustine noted (*Exp. Gal.*), in the traditional order Peter appears as inconsistent.²² This, of course, is not incredible in itself, and finds sup-

20 Lüdemann’s (1989) overall view is that the Antioch incident had to do with commensality and this question was resolved at the Jerusalem meeting by issuing the Apostolic decree. Previous proponents of a reversed order include Augustine, *Exp. Gal.*, Zahn (1905, 110–111) and Munck (1959, 74–75). Longenecker (1990, 46) believes Gal 2:1–10 reflects the so-called famine visit described in Acts 11:25–26, 30 and sees the Antioch incident as having taken place after it. However, he too takes the Antioch incident as the impetus to the actual Jerusalem meeting (which is not described in Galatians) (1990, 70).

21 “Concrete questions about the nature of the Jewish-Gentile fellowship in the congregations were evidently not solved in the Jerusalem meeting. They soon turned out to be problematic and caused a fateful clash in Antioch (Gal 2:11–14)” (Räsänen 2010, 61). Similarly Dunn 1993, 122 and Sanders 2015, 491.

22 Betz 1979, 104 attributes “human failure” to Peter. Longenecker 1990, 75–76 is a prime example of this viewpoint. He states Peter “became confused” and unable to “express his true convictions” under pressure. Furthermore he did not “realize” the implications of his

port in the gospel tradition, where Peter is repeatedly portrayed as confused and cowardly (especially Mark 14:66–72 par.). The problem in Gal 2 is that the image appears in an inherently hostile source. Paul's accusation centers on Peter, but it is telling that he simultaneously reveals that Barnabas, too, along with the other Jews, participated in the same "hypocrisy" as Peter, while Paul alone is left defending "the truth of the gospel". When this impression is created by a highly defensive and hostile witness, it should be treated with utmost criticality. Is it historically believable that during this episode everyone except Paul acted inconsistently and hypocritically, and defected from the truth?

Furthermore, two literary inconsistencies in Paul's depiction of the two events draw attention. 4. There is a certain redundancy and repetitiveness in the way Paul depicts intruders of some sort in connection with both the Jerusalem meeting as well as the Antioch incident (Gal 2:4 and 2:12a), which invites a simpler reading.

5. A further inconsistency can also be noted between verses 2:11 and 2:12a. While verse 11 relates the arriving of Peter (ἦλθον), verse 12a implies that he has already spent a considerable time in Antioch before the arrival of the men from James (πρὸ τοῦ γὰρ ἐλθεῖν τινὰς ἀπὸ Ἰακώβου ... συνήσθιν).²³ Furthermore, there seem to be "two separate triggering events for the Antioch incident": 1. Peter's arrival in Antioch (2:11) and 2. Peter's separation as a consequence of the arrival of the men from James (2:12b).²⁴

2.2 *The Order of Events Reconsidered*

These chronological and interpretive problems are, however, largely due to the mistaken reading of verse 2:12b opted by the major critical editions of the New Testament Greek text (e.g. NA 28). To my knowledge, Stephen Carlson is the latest to point this out.²⁵ In NA 28 the critical text of the verse Gal 2:12b currently reads: ὅτε δὲ ἦλθον, ὑπέστέλλεν καὶ ἀφώριζεν ἑαυτὸν φοβούμενος τοὺς ἐκ περιτομῆς, "But after they came, he drew back and kept himself separate for fear of the circumcision faction". This reading ties Peter's reaction immediately to the arrival of the men from James – both allegedly take place after the Jerusalem meeting.

actions. The other Jews were "confused" as well, while Barnabas defected from "what he knew to be right".

23 As Betz 1979, 106 puts it: "Clearly, the arrival of Cephas must have occurred prior to Paul's confronting him."

24 Carlson 2012, 162–163.

25 Carlson 2012, 161–164. I have also had the opportunity to read Carlson's more in depth, but yet unpublished, article "Ἠλθον or ἦλθεν? The Text of Galatians 2:12 and its Implications for the Relative Chronology of the Antioch Incident".

However, there is a significant text critical problem at the beginning of the sentence. The plural ὅτε δὲ ἦλθον (“when they came”) is not, in fact, the best supported reading. External textual evidence strongly suggests that the third person singular of the same verb should be opted for. The difference is only of one letter, from ο to ε. The text then would read ὅτε δὲ ἦλθεν, “when *he* came”. The passage is one of the few, where critical editions have chosen to follow a less supported reading. While the plural form is supported by witnesses such as Codex Alexandrinus (A), Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus (C), the Byzantine manuscript family and the Vulgate, the third person singular is backed by the oldest manuscript of Paul, the Chester Beatty Papyrus II (P 46), as well as our two most esteemed 4th century manuscripts, Codex Vaticanus (B) and Codex Sinaiticus (Ⲛ), which rightfully form the basis of modern critical texts of the New Testament.²⁶ The strong external evidence for the singular reading has been acknowledged.²⁷ Westcott and Hort admitted to making an exception in choosing against the joint witness of Sinaiticus and Vaticanus.²⁸ Similarly J. B. Lightfoot admitted the “weight of authority” in favor of the singular reading, but chose the plural because the singular made “no good sense” to him.²⁹ Interestingly, none of these scholars provide a detailed explanation for rejecting the singular, and have to assume a very early corruption of the text.³⁰

As for internal criteria, the singular reading meets the criterion of *lectio difficilior*, making a later correction to the plural understandable. The plural is makes for the easier reading as it refers to the latest (plural) occurrence of the verb ἔρχομαι in 12a. The singular, on the other hand, needs to be seen as referring further back to verse 11, the subject of which is Peter.³¹

In the singular reading, the verse 12b, in fact, *resumes the story of Peter's arrival mentioned in verse 11*.³² Verse 12a then can be seen as a parenthesis or digression, the events of which do not have to be tied together with the story of Peter's arrival in Antioch after the Jerusalem meeting. Verse 12a can, in fact, be

26 For fuller list of textual witnesses in both directions, see Carlson 2012, 161.

27 “Given the strength of the external evidence, the internal evidence would have to be in favor of the ἦλθον to prevail” (Carlson 2012, 161).

28 Westcott and Hort 1882, 224.

29 Lightfoot 1870, 239. Similarly Dunn 1993, 115 n. 4. Longenecker admits the singular is better supported, but opts for the plural “for internal reasons” (1990, 63) and suggests the singular is “an early scribal error” (1990, 72).

30 Lightfoot even suggests that the singular verb “may possibly be due to an error of the original amanuensis” (1870, 239).

31 Carlson 2012, 161.

32 Carlson 2012, 162: “Paul restarts the account by repeating the triggering phrase ὅτε δὲ ἦλθεν in v. 12.”

understood to depict the situation before the Antioch incident “proper”, and before the Jerusalem meeting and the events leading up to it.³³

2:11 When Cephas came (ὅτε δὲ ἦλθεν Κηφᾶς) to Antioch I opposed him to his face, because he stood self-condemned;

2:12a (for until certain people came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles.)

2:12b *When he came* (ὅτε δὲ ἦλθεν), he drew back and kept himself separate for fear of the circumcision faction. (NRSV, except for the italicized clause and parentheses).

With this reading the five main problems with the traditional view find a plausible solution. 5. The inconsistency of Peter’s arrival in 2:11 and his lengthier stay in 2:12a disappears. Paul begins the story by recounting Peter’s arrival in Antioch, but then digresses into offering relevant background information, while the initial story is resumed in 12b.

4. The depiction of “intruders” of some sort in connection with both the Jerusalem meeting and the Antioch incident (Gal 2:4 and 2:12a) finds a simpler solution. When verse 12a is understood to depict events leading up the meeting, it becomes natural to identify “the false brethren” with “the men from James”. In addition to reasons of traditional chronology, the identification is often rejected on the grounds that the two groups seem to appear at different locations. The “false brethren”, who are said to have “sneaked in in order to spy our freedom and enslave us” (Gal 2:4) are often taken to appear only at the Jerusalem meeting.³⁴ It is more natural, however, to assume that they were present (at least *also*) in the church of Antioch.³⁵ The way Paul speaks of “freedom” fits Antioch better than the circumstances of the Jerusalem meeting. Also, they are told to have been “secretly brought in (παρεισάκτους)³⁶ to spy (κατασκοπεῖσαι)” – apparently by someone who was in a position to monitor other Christ-believers.³⁷ It does not quite sound correct that the Jerusalem

33 Carlson 2012, 163.

34 Bruce 1983, 115–117 and Watson 1986, 50–51 favor Antioch, but Longenecker 1990, 50–51 and several others Jerusalem. E.g. Dunn 1993, 98 thinks the assumption of Antioch here gives a “fractured train of thought”.

35 Thus, Martyn 1997, 196; Räisänen 2010, 253.

36 That they were “brought in” reveals that someone else – that is the Jerusalem leadership – was behind the actions of the false brethren. Longenecker 1990, 51 denies this without arguments.

37 Dunn 1993, 98 (who believes the false brethren appeared only at the meeting) tentatively suggests that James may have sponsored these “more traditionalist Jewish believers”.

leaders, authorities themselves, were subject to being “spied on”. All this considered, it seems likely that Paul, at the beginning of his description of the Jerusalem meeting, refers to what happened before the Jerusalem meeting in Antioch – a situation he recounts again in 2:12a.³⁸

1. In the revised reading, the events in 12b can be understood as taking place before the Jerusalem meeting, and even as triggering it. Verses 2:11–14, thus, in fact depict two “incidents” in Antioch. That conservative Jerusalem envoys witness commensality in Antioch provides a plausible social reason for the later Jerusalem meeting. Furthermore, as was noted above, Luke, too, found it natural and reasonable to utilize some of Gal 2:12 as part of his depiction of events *preceding* the Jerusalem meeting. The way he has “certain individuals from Judaea” come to Antioch before the Jerusalem meeting (Acts 15:1–2) fits Paul’s story of the men from James who do the same.³⁹ The fact that Luke even has James later explicitly *deny* having sent these men (Acts 15:24) confirms he had Paul’s story of Antioch in mind.⁴⁰ In support of Stephen Carlson’s solution, it must be noted that for Luke, too, the falling out between Paul and Barnabas comes only after the meeting (15:36–40).

2. The problem of “naive commensality” disappears as well. While the element of confusion over commensality or over the decisions about it in Jerusalem cannot be ruled out completely,⁴¹ the core of Paul’s story, when “cleansed” from rhetorical aims, suggests that Peter, Barnabas, and the other Jews agreed on the table-conventions after the meeting. The criterion of embarrassment/dissimilarity yields the historicity of what Paul is forced to admit: that the others had found agreement on the matter – against himself. Thus, it is likely that Peter enjoyed common meals with the Gentiles until the men from James reacted to it (the initial incident at Antioch) and the matter was more or less officially decided upon at the Jerusalem meeting. 3. Acting in accordance with the decisions of the meeting during a second visit to Antioch (“the Antioch incident proper”) would not amount to hypocrisy or inconsistency on Peter’s part. That Paul uses rhetorical embellishment to make Peter and the others appear this way is a different story. It is probably no coincidence

38 Despite assuming that the “false brethren” appeared in Antioch, Räisänen does not make this connection and resorts to redundancy: “The table fellowship in Antioch later *again* proved unacceptable to visiting ‘men from James’ ...” (2010, 254 [emphasis mine]).

39 Longenecker 1990, lxxxii sees that this supports his view that the events depicted in Gal 2:11–14 *in toto* precede the Jerusalem meeting (which he believes has not yet taken place when Paul was writing Galatians).

40 For a general view of Luke’s rewriting of the Antioch incident, see H. Leppä 2002, 111–114.

41 Even Carlson (2012, 163) attributes confusion and misunderstanding between Paul and Peter after the Jerusalem meeting.

that Paul leaves the historical reasons behind the meeting to this later point in the text. This gives him the possibility to emphasize his independence at the beginning of the description of the Jerusalem meeting, and at the same time to portray Peter in a dubious light. It seems to me that later readers have happily stepped into Paul's rhetorical trap.

2.3 *Jewish and Gentile Commensality in the First Century CE*

Before turning to the actual contents and implications of the Antioch event(s), a general overview is in order of how shared meals between Jews and Gentiles were commonly viewed in the first century CE. The question is far from simple, and solutions have varied accordingly.

Philip Esler has taken an extreme view and suggested that shared meals between Gentiles and Jews must have been almost non-existent in the first century CE ("as a general rule Jews did refrain from eating with gentiles").⁴² Esler's arguments are initially presented in his 1987 *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts: The Social and Political Motivations of Lucan Theology*. In his 1998 *Galatians* he answers criticism engendered by the earlier work and makes some further developments, but essentially stands by his earlier conviction.⁴³ Esler bases this argument not only on what he calls "anthropological probability" derived from investigations on purity laws by e.g. Mary Douglas,⁴⁴ but also on a vast amount of both Jewish and Gentile literature, both of which attest to the reclusiveness of Jews when it came to common meals.⁴⁵ Esler suggests that Jews were not only rigorous when it came to food regulations, but considered contact with uncircumcised Gentiles a source of impurity per se and, therefore, avoided any table company with them.⁴⁶ Esler keeps apart the historical fact of the ban on table-fellowship and the possible reasons behind it. As emic explanations, he points to a fear that the vessels used to prepare the food had become polluted by forbidden foods and to the ritual impurity of Gentiles per se through the idols they worshipped.⁴⁷

42 Esler 1987, 77.

43 Esler 1998, 93–116.

44 Esler 1987, 73–76.

45 Esler 1987, 76–86. Esler refers to such Jewish literature as the Book of Daniel, Book of Judith, Book of Esther, the apocryphal Letter of Aristeas, Book of Jubilees, Joseph and Aseneth, and Mishnaic and Talmudic works. From the Gentile side he takes up works of Hecataeus of Abdera, Apollonius Molon, Diodorus Siculus, Pompeius Trogus, Tacitus, and Philostratus.

46 Esler 1987, 85.

47 Esler 1987, 85–86.

Esler's initial conclusions attracted strong criticism from E. P. Sanders, who claims that shared meals between Jews and Gentiles must have been fairly common in the first century. The crux of his argument rests on the wealth of evidence for social interaction between Jews and Gentiles combined with the lack of any biblical law that would restrict table-fellowship. According to Sanders, the problem with commensality revolved around the quality of the food, but as long as that was taken care of, Jews could generally eat together with Gentiles.⁴⁸

Bengt Holmberg, in turn, criticizes Sanders for mixing different spheres of association between Jews and Gentiles. He agrees with Sanders in that Jews did associate with Gentiles in a more public sphere (such as public baths and theatres) but points out that this does not prove that interaction was similar on other levels. Holmberg insists that interaction in the public sphere did not necessarily mean that Jews welcomed Gentiles openly into their more intimate lives, such as meals.⁴⁹ Holmberg believes that total *reciprocity*, at least, was never possible in the intimate sphere, even though he believes it is possible that (at least some) Jews could invite Gentiles to their homes, where the environment was controllable. However, they may still have refused to be hosted by a Gentile.⁵⁰ Esler, on the other hand, admits that Sanders does in essence show an understanding of the coexistence of differently proscribed or prescribed zones of interaction.⁵¹ Accordingly, he suggests that Sanders' overall view is relatable to the views, favored by Esler himself, of anthropologist Fredrik Barth, who suggests that maintenance of ethnic boundaries vis-à-vis others usually entails that intercourse between groups is restricted in some areas but allowed in certain others.⁵²

Although James Dunn's general view on commensality has received due criticism,⁵³ his note about the relative nature of purity in Judaism is attractive. It sounds reasonable to assume that differences could also exist inside the same "zone" of behavior (eating). Dunn notes that Jewish sources testify that a priest serving in the temple would contract impurity from a Pharisee, while a

48 Sanders 1990, 170–188.

49 Holmberg 1998, 402.

50 Holmberg 1998, 401–404.

51 While Dunn, for example, according to Esler (1998, 99), does not.

52 Esler 1998, 98, 100.

53 Dunn (1983, 3–57) believes that commensality was historically probable in the first century and problems concerning it could be solved by stricter adherence to ritual cleanness and tithes by Gentiles. Sanders (1990, 73–76) points out correctly, that these are intra-Palestinian and intra-Pharisaic questions that would have had no relevance in the diaspora.

Pharisee would contract it from an *am ha-aretz*. If we take Gentiles to be at one end in this spectrum, it seems possible that eating with a non-Jew was more problematic for, say, a Pharisee than a “common” Jew. The views and practices could have varied accordingly.⁵⁴ To make things even more complicated, even the Gentiles could be taken to exhibit different degrees of purity. There is a real possibility that one group of Gentiles, namely the so-called God-fearers, may have been viewed differently by Jews. The God-fearers were attracted to Judaism and observed many Jewish practices. It is, however, problematic to determine the exact status of these God-fearers, since their degree of law-observance varied considerably.⁵⁵ Some would observe all food regulations, and even cease sacrificing to all other gods except the one God of the Jews.⁵⁶ This may have made it essentially safe for Jews to share meals with them without running a risk of breaking food laws or the basic rules concerning idolatry. Despite these suggestions, however, the sources suggest Jews still generally avoided commensality with Gentiles. A particularly pressing question was the possibility of getting tangled up in idolatry through Gentile wine, which was regarded as “routinely dedicated to pagan gods by the offering of a small libation”.⁵⁷ Gentiles were suspected even of secretly turning Jewish wine into libation to their own gods.⁵⁸ In fact, in 1998 Esler answers Sanders about the question of biblical law by explaining how the ban on table-fellowship could be seen as “a *direct application* of the biblical laws forbidding idolatry”.⁵⁹ The questions of food vs. the Gentile uncircumcised status become intertwined: as long as a person was a Gentile, he could not be trusted to provide harmless food. Regardless of the distinctions, the fact remains that eating together was always problematic.⁶⁰

54 Dunn 1983, 21.

55 Dunn 1983, 21, 23.

56 Josephus tells the story of Izates, the king of Adiabene, who followed all the laws and customs of Judaism, apart from circumcision (*A.J.* 20.2.4, § 41–45).

57 Esler 1998, 104–108 (quote from p. 105); Holmberg 1998, 405–406. Later, in the Mishnah, Gentile wine is forbidden completely. The rationalization behind this was that Gentiles could under no circumstances be trusted not to pour libations of their wine to idols. See *Aboda Zarah* 4–5.

58 Esler 1998, 105.

59 Esler 1998, 98, 104–116.

60 Holmberg (1998, 403) concludes that Jews would always avoid “uncontrolled commensality”. Luke provides an example. His story of Cornelius centers on the uncircumcised state of the table-fellow. In the story Jerusalem Jewish Christians explicitly reproach Peter for eating with an uncircumcised person (Acts 11:3). They show no interest in the fact that the person in question was a pious God-fearer and apparently followed Jewish food regulations (Acts 10:2).

Lastly, Holmberg's observations about the use of ancient sources should not go unnoticed. He states that already Sanders made an improvement to the discussion by pointing out a distinction between historical reality and theoretical legal material in his Jewish sources, that is, between "*prescription* and *description*".⁶¹ Holmberg also takes up the commonly known fact that Mishnaic material, which Esler at points resorts to, cannot be taken as reflecting pre-70 "prescription", let alone act as a "description" of that time. Furthermore, even if some of this material were traceable to a time before the Jewish War, it would still only serve to illuminate the ideals of just one considerably strict, Pharisaic, stream of Judaism.⁶² This is a sound point, which may mean that actual practice was sometimes looser than Esler admits.⁶³ However, the observation loses some of its relevance in the case of Antioch, since the disagreement there was not merely about common meals, but about Eucharistic ones, which meant sharing "food, wine and vessels" and a "marked intimacy" between the participants.⁶⁴ A situation like this is to be distinguished from, say, the phenomenon of "meals in parallel", and would be likely to invite stricter reactions than a more mundane one.⁶⁵ Furthermore, if the Lord's Supper was viewed as in any way parallel in holiness to the Jewish Passover meal, those opposing commensality could, in biblical logic (Ex 12:43–49), have concluded that circumcision was a necessary requirement for participation.

1.2.4 The Problem of Gentile Table-Company in Antioch

There are instances in Galatians that can be used to determine what the situation was regarding commensality between those of Jewish and Gentile background in Antioch before the Jerusalem meeting, and what the men from James considered to be the main problem. In verse 2:12a, where the pre-meeting situation is described, Paul relates that Peter ate together with the Gentiles (μετὰ τῶν ἐθνῶν συνήσθιεν). The imperfect tense of the verb "eat" gives a sense of a continuing action or habit: Peter had taken part in shared

61 It is somewhat unclear whether Holmberg (1998, 400–401) directly criticizes Esler.

62 Holmberg 1998, 400–401. As for Esler's Gentile sources, Hill has demonstrated their polemical and hyperbolic nature (1992, 118–119).

63 Hill (1992, 120) even suggests that the way strict observance of food laws is highlighted in the literature may reveal that, in reality, people were in the habit of breaking these ideals.

64 Esler (1998, 101) criticizes Sanders for overlooking this point. Holmberg (1998, 405) agrees that the meals in Antioch were "not simply occasions of nourishment and general social intercourse, but were connected with a central Christian rite, the celebration of the Lord's Supper".

65 Esler 1998, 101–102. E.g. Hill's (1992, 121) suggestion that Jews could perhaps even have eaten in Gentile homes (possibly even in the same table with them), providing they had brought their own kosher food with them, loses relevance here.

(Eucharistic) meals with Gentiles more than the one time.⁶⁶ The comment shows no interest in the quality of the food on the table. Rather, the central question appears to be the company around it. What is related about the behavior of, not only Peter, but all the Jews after the meeting coheres with this. Peter *separated himself*, and the rest followed.

Further clues can be found in the following speech material. In a citation of his own words to Peter in 2:15 Paul concentrates on the question of descent (Ἡμεῖς φύσει Ἰουδαῖοι καὶ οὐκ ἐξ ἐθνῶν ἀμαρτωλοί), but – again – does not take up food. A somewhat more relevant passage in 2:14⁶⁷ seems to play with the idea of kosher food. In a citation of his own words to Peter at the “Antioch incident proper” (that is, when Peter came to Antioch after the Jerusalem meeting), Paul accuses Peter of “living like a Gentile and not like a Jew” (ἐθνικῶς καὶ οὐχὶ Ἰουδαϊκῶς ζῆς), but still demanding “the Gentiles to Judaize” (Ἰουδαῖζειν).⁶⁸ The problem with the passage is its vagueness. We are left in the dark as to what “living like a Gentile” and “living like a Jew” specifically entailed. James Dunn suggests that Paul is here quoting the original accusations towards Peter et al. by the men from James,⁶⁹ but even this does not help, since we cannot determine what exactly would have constituted “living like a Gentile” from their point of view. Dunn is probably correct in that language like this belonged to intra-Jewish polemic, when a more scrupulous group castigated a less scrupulous one by using crude polarization.⁷⁰ But this means the statement is relative and dependent on the context, and as such cannot yield precise information. Even if we allowed that it meant eating non-kosher food,⁷¹ the probability that this is a rhetorical exaggeration built on a deliberately vague expression still prevents detailed conclusions. The decisive point, however, is that Paul never *expressis verbis* accuses Peter of eating Gentile food. Had Peter done exactly that, Paul could have pointed it out here in a manner that would leave no room

66 Betz 1979, 107.

67 Verse 2:14 makes for a more reliable historical witness, since it is more closely tied to the event described in the previous verses, and forms a succinct comment related to it, whereas v. 2:15 clearly begins a proper speech, written for the purposes of the letter. In rhetorical terms, v. 14 is still part of the *narratio*, while v. 15 begins the *propositio* of the letter (Longenecker 1990, 83).

68 The precise meaning of this word will be discussed in the next chapter.

69 Dunn 1993, 122, 128.

70 Dunn 1993, 127–128.

71 Betz 1979, 104 entertains the possibility that Peter had taken up “even the Gentile way of life altogether”, but after the arrival of the men from James “took up again the Jewish way of life”. (Similarly Longenecker 1990, 78). But there is something inherently implausible about this assumption that a born Jew could this easily fluctuate between dropping and following food regulations.

for doubt. Nor do we hear about Peter's assumedly Gentile eating habits in other Pauline correspondence where we would expect him to use the matter in favor of his own liberal stance (1 Cor, Rom). The reason for this is most probably that Paul simply had no knowledge of any instance when Peter had defected from Jewish food regulations.

Further validation may lie with Luke's interpretation of Paul's text. It was noted above that Luke does not offer a proper report of the Antioch incident, but does use material from Gal 2:11–14 in his description of the reasons behind the Jerusalem meeting: in Luke's story the demand is circumcision, not a more scrupulous attitude to food regulations (Acts 15:1–2). Also, the Cornelius episode (Acts 10–11) is similar to the Antioch incident in many ways: Peter eats with a Gentile God-fearer and is rebuked by the Jerusalem brothers. While Luke, in the story, does play with the idea of clean and unclean food (Acts 10:9–16, "I have never eaten anything that is profane or unclean"), the actual rebuke by the Jerusalem authorities has to do with the uncircumcision of Peter's table-fellow (Acts 11:3). This is also how Peter interprets his vision about the foods: "God has shown me that I should not call anyone profane or unclean" (Acts 10:28).

It has often been noted that the Gentile believers in Antioch were most probably God-fearers and, therefore, accustomed to observing at least the major regulations.⁷² Dunn has suggested that, in practice, commensality in Antioch would probably have meant that the Jewish Christ-believers accepted invitations from the Gentiles without asking too many questions, but at the same time expected them to serve essentially kosher food.⁷³ Even if this milder option is the case, it is safe to go with what Paul's text suggests: the question at Antioch was not about the particularities of the food on the table, but about the Gentile status of the company in a Eucharistic context. The situation could not be fixed by turning more attention to the quality of the food.

In this reading, the witness of commensality in Antioch by the men from James (2:12a) forms the essential background and impetus for the Jerusalem meeting. In verses 2:11, 12b–14 cessation of commensality emerges as a consequence of the meeting. We turn now to the contents of the Jerusalem meeting.

72 Dunn 1983, 23; Holmberg 1998, 405. Josephus attests to the great number of Jews and God-fearers in Antioch before the Jewish War (*B.J.* 7.3.3. § 45).

73 Dunn 1993, 121; similarly Holmberg 1998, 405.

3 The Jerusalem Meeting

3.1 *The Differences Between Acts and Galatians*

Paul depicts the so-called Jerusalem meeting in Gal 2:1–10. Luke relates a story of the same event in Acts 15.⁷⁴ For the present investigation, it is of particular interest that there is good reason to suspect that Luke is heavily (even exclusively?) dependent on Gal at this point (just as with his almost nonexistent presentation of the Antioch incident).⁷⁵ This means that he is unlikely to offer any additional, historically relevant material concerning the meeting. His contribution consists mainly of redactional effort, which aims at correcting the undesirable image of the event(s) transmitted by Gal 2.⁷⁶

The question of how Luke and Paul respectively describe the reasons leading up to the meeting was already discussed above: while Luke offers believable social reasons relating to the question of circumcision and the relationship between the two churches of Jerusalem and Antioch, Paul, by speaking of revelation, stresses his independence of churchly authorities and emphasizes direct divine commissioning. Paul nowhere articulates that he acted as a representative of the Antioch church, but this reflects the writing situation, when he was no longer willing or able to profile himself as an Antiochene. The emphasis on independence is somewhat compromised when Paul later admits that the reason behind his attendance was to get some form of approval for his gospel by the Jerusalem leaders (Gal 2:2b). This is probably how the situation was seen by Paul and the Antioch church at the time. Luke, then, seems to offer some realism at this point.

Another difference often taken up concerns the question of Paul's apostolicity. Luke is unambiguous: for him Paul was never an apostle, since only the

74 For Paul, this is his second visit to Jerusalem, whereas Luke's Paul makes an additional visit to Jerusalem between these two to deliver famine relief (Acts 11:29–30). H. Leppä (2002, 54, 93–98) notes the verbal similarity between Gal 2:10 (ὁ καὶ ἐποίησαν) and Acts 11:30 (ὁ καὶ ... ποιῆσαι), and suggests that Luke's only source in composing Acts 11:29–30 was Gal 2:1–10. Leppä "on one level" agrees with those who believe Luke invented the Antioch collection as "replacement for the Gentile collection". Pervo (2006, 79) agrees that literary dependence is likely here. Most scholars hold that Gal 2 and Acts 15 describe the same event (for discussion, see e.g. Dunn 1993, 88; Painter 1999, 59; Pervo 2006, 79). Longenecker (1990, lxxx–lxxxii) believes that Gal 2:1–10 should be identified with Acts 11:27–30, which means that the so-called Jerusalem meeting had not yet taken place when Galatians was written.

75 According to H. Leppä (2002, 114) Luke uses Galatians here and there are no "appropriate reasons to assume that [Luke] had any other valuable sources describing the events Paul mentioned in Gal 2." Similarly, Pervo 2006, 80–81.

76 H. Leppä 2002, 114.

twelve disciples of Jesus were granted the title. Paul, on the other hand, is extremely direct on his claim to apostleship at the beginning of the letter (Gal 1:1). However, as many have pointed out Paul does not explicitly use the term of himself in the context of the agreement.

... I had been entrusted the gospel to the uncircumcision
as Peter [the gospel] of the circumcision
... for the one who worked through Peter for the apostleship of the
circumcision
worked also through me for [the apostleship of] the nations⁷⁷

Gerd Lüdemann assumes that Paul has purposely structured the sentences in 2:7–9 in chiasmic form in order to create the impression that he was granted apostolic status, even though in reality this was not so.⁷⁸ This has been rejected on account that the text is a fully legitimate *comparatio compendaria* and as such automatically means that the word ἀποστολή should be assumed for Paul's missionary work as well.⁷⁹ The overall discussion about whether Paul was or was not "granted" apostleship in Jerusalem has, in fact, been too much effected by Luke's narrow view of apostleship. Whether or not Paul could have been called "an apostle" by the Jerusalem leaders depends on their use of the title. If they reserved it to a limited group of earliest followers to whom the risen Jesus had appeared (1 Cor 9, 15), Paul's experience could be contested. If the title was used more pragmatically as anyone sent to proclaim the gospel (like Paul himself does in e.g. 2 Cor 8:23 and Rom 16:7), it could be used of Paul as long as his work was seen as legitimate. Whether Paul was considered *equal* to the Pillars is another question and seems highly unlikely. The "offering of the right hand" depicted in 2:9 does not indicate equality but implies superiority on the Jerusalem side.⁸⁰ Paul's earlier emphasis on having received his gospel not from humans but directly from God (Gal 1:11–12), reflects this problematic power-relationship between himself and the Jerusalem/Antioch authorities.

The most notable difference between the two depictions concerns the so-called Apostolic Decree, which represents a minimum of Jewish moral and

77 Translation mine.

78 Lüdemann 1989, 76–77. Betz (1979, 82, 98–99) holds that while Paul's gospel was recognized as equal with that of the Jerusalem apostles, Paul himself was never granted the title "apostle".

79 McLean 1991, 68–70. Painter (1997, 65), also, takes note of this but still believes that Lüdemann is correct in suspecting that Paul's apostleship was contested in Jerusalem.

80 Betz 1979, 100. Esler (1998, 133) explains the gesture through the examples in 1–2 Macc, where a superior is always depicted as offering the right hand to the "suppliant".

ritual observance required of Gentile believers. While Luke has the Jerusalem meeting issue the decree (Acts 15:28–29), Paul stresses that nothing was demanded of him except the collection for the poor in Jerusalem (Gal 2:6, 10). Lüdemann is an exception among contemporary scholars in considering Luke's description historical. He believes that the Antioch incident took place before the Jerusalem meeting, which then issued the decree as a solution to the problems of communion in mixed churches. In Lüdemann's view Paul is not being completely untruthful either: his churches consisted (almost) completely of Gentiles and, thus, were not really subject to the decree.⁸¹

Evidence against the historicity of the decree is, however, overwhelming. In addition to having no support in Galatians, the primary source, Paul seems completely ignorant of the decree in his other letters as well. Had he known it, he could have used it in his argumentation concerning food in 1 Cor 8, 10.⁸² More importantly, Luke himself fumbles on the topic. He has the Jerusalem elders report the seemingly ignorant Paul about the enactment of the decree when he comes to Jerusalem on his final visit (Acts 21:25). It is, in fact, not completely unthinkable that a decree of this sort was decided on later, perhaps even when Paul was away in Asia Minor and Macedonia. Luke may only have condensed history somewhat by having the decree issued already at the initial meeting. This may be supported by the second century Jewish Christian Pseudo-Clementines which seem to know about the decree.⁸³ It is possible that Luke was aware of a tradition according to which Paul was informed about the decree during his last visit but forgot to adjust this story to his depiction of the Jerusalem meeting. H. Leppä has reasonably suggested that something like the decree was probably used in Luke's time at least in the places whence it is addressed (Antioch, Syria, Cilicia). Thus, the decree itself does not seem to be a completely Lukan creation, but deriving it from the meeting is.⁸⁴ When we take the events in Gal 2:11, 12b–14 as having taken place after the meeting, it is significant that the meeting, in fact, effected a separation of Gentiles and Jews at meals – not the other way around, as Luke would have it.

At least the following minor differences between Luke and Paul can also be detected: Paul clearly describes two meetings, a private session with the pillars (Gal 2:2) and a larger assembly (Gal 2:4–10).⁸⁵ Luke has only one public convention in mind. In Acts 15:2 the Antioch church sends an undefined group

81 Lüdemann 1989, 74.

82 H. Leppä 2002, 128.

83 Rec 4:36.4. par Hom 7.8.1. Jones (2005, 321) lists many who do not believe the author knew Acts, but has himself argued for the dependence of Rec 1 on Acts (1995).

84 H. Leppä 2002, 131.

85 Betz 1979, 86.

of delegates, but no mention is made of the Gentile convert Titus,⁸⁶ whereas in Paul's account the case of Titus forms the central argument in favor of the non-circumcision of Gentile Christians. Furthermore, in Acts 15 the decision that Peter should evangelize the Jews is not stated, unlike in Galatians.

Overall, Luke's treatment of the Jerusalem meeting as well as the Antioch incident matches the way he elsewhere conveys an image of the early church as unified and harmonious. Any dissent between Paul and Peter is eliminated by either erasing Peter altogether (only Barnabas remains in Luke's depiction of the Antioch incident), or by making the two look alike: in Acts it is Peter, and not Paul, who actually begins the Gentile mission (Acts 15:7). Peter has already converted the Gentile Cornelius – and basically solved the question of Gentile converts – before the meeting (Acts 10). Also, while in Gal Paul accuses Peter of attempting to enslave Gentiles with the Law (Gal 2:14), in Acts, it is Peter who accuses other Jews of the same (Acts 15:10). Furthermore, in Acts Peter speaks of salvation outside the Law much in the manner Paul does in Gal 2:16.⁸⁷

3.2 *What Was Decided at the Jerusalem Meeting?*

Thus far we have established one issue that was *not* decided at the meeting: the Apostolic Decree. The formal gesture of handshaking (Gal 2:9), however, confirms that agreement(s) of some sort were undoubtedly reached in Jerusalem. Among the more certain ones is a decision about the collection to the poor in Jerusalem. It is not only confirmed by Paul in connection with his depiction of the meeting (Gal 2:10) but appears in several other places in his letters as well (1 Cor, 2 Cor 8–9, Rom 15). Throughout his work in Asia Minor and Macedonia Paul seems to have been very committed to collecting the financial gift he had promised for the Jerusalem church. Luke is completely silent about the collection in Acts 15, but shows awareness of it elsewhere, especially Acts 24:17. Secondly, it was already suggested above that the meeting essentially effected a cessation of table-fellowship between Gentile and Jewish believers in Antioch. Commensality constituted the initial social reason behind the need for the Jerusalem meeting, and there is every reason to believe this question was also resolved.

There is wide agreement in scholarship that the Jerusalem meeting dealt with and accepted that Paul would preach to the Gentiles. I agree with this. There is also general agreement that it was decided that the Gentiles would not need to be circumcised. This question, in turn, is much more ambiguous and complex than usually imagined.

86 See below on Luke's deliberate silence about Titus.

87 Walker 1985, 11–12.

The first obvious reason to doubt the traditional view that Paul's Gentile converts were unambiguously and officially exempted from circumcision is the simple fact that Paul himself never claims this in so many words – not counting here the dubious mention of Titus (Gal 2:3, to be discussed below). In the context of the Galatian debate, Paul could easily have pointed out that the opponents were acting blatantly *against* the decisions of the meeting.⁸⁸ To be sure, this is the impression Paul attempts to give. But it is still notable, that he does not utter it clearly. For this point to be valid, it makes no difference whether the opponents in Galatia worked directly for the Jerusalem church or represented a more ambiguous “third party”. In the first case, Paul could have blamed the Jerusalem leaders for being inconsistent traitors, and in the second one, he could have blamed the opponents for not adhering to the decisions made by these known authorities. On a close reading, it is striking that he does neither. This is strong evidence that no explicit decision was uttered that Paul could leave his Gentile converts uncircumcised.

Secondly, there is a notable inconsistency between the alleged decisions of the meeting and to what is taking place in Galatia. Various solutions have been proposed. Many have found it hard to assume that the Galatian opponents were in close connection with the Jerusalem church, which had, allegedly, decided in Paul's favor. This has led to the assumption of a third group, the unlikelihood of which will be discussed below in connection with the Galatian crisis. Those who have been willing to admit that Paul does connect the opponents with the Jerusalem church have also been at pains to provide solutions. Generally, they have been forced to assume that a change of mind and procedure occurred with the Jerusalem church between the meeting and the Galatian crisis.⁸⁹ This has sometimes been explained as resulting from a change in Jerusalem leadership (from Peter to the more conservative James)⁹⁰ and/or

88 Longenecker (1990, lxxix) notes this correctly and says it would have served as the “coup de grâce” to the conflict in Galatia. However, Longenecker solves the problem by concluding that the Jerusalem meeting had not yet taken place when Paul wrote Galatians (Longenecker identifies Gal 2:1–10 with the famine relief visit depicted by Luke in Acts 11).

89 Betz (1979, 82) states that “Jerusalem leaders must have changed their position afterwards” and that “by the time of his letter to the Galatians, Paul is the only one who had kept his position”.

90 Lüdemann (1989, 45–46) assumes the change in leadership occurred already between Paul's first and second visits to Jerusalem and is reflected in the order of names from Peter to James first between 2:7–8 and 2:9. Petrine leadership had changed to the more conservative, “judaizing” nature of James' leadership (reflected e.g. in the use of semitic “Cephas” in 2:9 instead of the Greek “Peter”). Similarly Dunn 1993, 122–123.

radicalization of the political climate.⁹¹ The latter, according to Udo Schnelle, meant for the Jerusalem church “modifications of its previous stance toward the decisions made at the apostolic council. This would mean in the least that it gave its approval to the work of Jewish Christian missionaries.”⁹² However, if a change occurs from Peter to James, this should be placed *before* the meeting. James is the one whose men disapprove of commensality in Antioch, and James is the authority to whom Peter succumbs. Accordingly, James’ stance is the one which informs the meeting as well. Another solution has been offered by Philip Esler, who thinks the decision made at the meeting was later broken by the Jerusalem authorities.⁹³ Esler argues that a handshake was considered less binding than the traditional Jewish oath-taking and could therefore be crossed.⁹⁴ While social realia like these did, of course, exist, assuming a radical and sudden change in thought and procedure by the Jerusalem leaders is not the most natural solution to the problem. On an even more general note, it is difficult to understand the continuing confusion and debate in early Christian sources – and lack of appeals to the meeting – over the issue of circumcision.

There are many ambiguities concerning the decision in Gal 2:1–10. The first one has to do with the role of Titus in Gal 2:3. Paul places at the top of his argumentation the claim that “even Titus, who was with me, was not compelled to be circumcised” (οὐδὲ Τίτος ὁ σὺν ἐμοί ... ἡναγκάσθη ... περιτμηθῆναι). This is the *only* phrase where permission of uncircumcision of a Gentile is stated. The problem is that this single case hardly represents a rule.⁹⁵ Heikki Leppä has suggested that Paul here illegitimately uses an exception as a backing for a rule, which means that perhaps the issue of circumcision was not settled

91 This view was influentially forwarded by Jewett (1971, 198–212), who suggested that Judean Jewish Christians were experiencing increasing pressure from the nomistic Zealots, who sought to hasten the arrival of the messianic kingdom by cleansing Israel from all impurity (including close relationships with Gentiles). The political climate is also taken up by Dunn 1993, 123. Esler (1998, 74), however, has pointed out that this assumption lacks specific evidence and does not take into account Paul’s persecutive actions already in the 30s.

92 Schnelle 2005, 275–276. See also Watson 1986, 59–61.

93 To be exact, Esler assumes that the main question to which everything culminated was commensality between circumcised and uncircumcised Christ-believers (1998, 130–136). This was first agreed on at the Jerusalem meeting but later revoked in Antioch. However, in Esler’s view the question of circumcision is directly dependent on commensality.

94 Esler 1995, 285–314; Esler 1998, 134–135.

95 According to Longenecker (1990, 50), “The negative conjunction οὐδέ (‘not even’) lays stress on the evidential value of ‘Titus’ case: if true for him, it is true in principle”.

at all in the meeting.⁹⁶ The bothersome appearance of Titus at this point has been explained as Paul having taken him along as a test-case, which means that the whole question was personified in Titus.⁹⁷ But it is not evident that Paul suggests this, and even if he does, it should be viewed as part of his rhetorical tactic.

It has also been suggested that the way Paul stresses that Titus was not *forced* to become circumcised implies that this had at least been suggested, maybe even demanded at first,⁹⁸ which would make the issue of circumcision a central point of argument at the meeting (and thus likely to be ruled on). Interestingly, it has even been suggested that Paul's stress in 2:3 lies on the word *forced*, meaning that Titus *was*, in fact, circumcised – but voluntarily.⁹⁹ This is not a strange reading: Luke at least seems to know that Paul had one of his Greek co-workers circumcised.¹⁰⁰

Paul's words in 2:6 (and 2:10), where he states that the Pillars “contributed nothing to me” make yet another fuzzy argument. The context of the Galatian debate suggests circumcision of the Gentile converts is meant by the mysterious further demands.¹⁰¹ If, as I believe is possible, eventual circumcision of Gentile converts was taken for granted not only by the Jerusalem authorities but perhaps by Paul himself at this point in history, a demand like this would not have needed to be uttered explicitly. Later, in Gal, Paul can make the unfair argument that since circumcision was not demanded, it means uncircumcision was allowed.

96 H. Leppä 2002, 111.

97 Betz 1979, 91; Martyn (1997, 194) speaks of “Gentile Christians represented in Titus”.

98 Dunn 1993, 96.

99 So, Walker 1981, 231–235. Pervo (2006, 85) notes that the textual context allows this reading. Verses 3 and 4 (which does not form a full sentence) can be read together so that the idea of Titus' voluntary circumcision is filled in in the ellipsis (Titus was not forced, but went through circumcision voluntarily, because of the false brethren ...). Elimination of a few potentially harmful words makes beautiful sense here. That the passage has created confusion is also evident from the fact that the negating words οἷς οὐδέ (2:5) have been omitted from the Western text (followed by Tertullian and Irenaeus) producing the reading “we gave in for a moment”.

100 According to Walker (1981, 231–235; followed by Pervo 2006, 86–88) it is possible that Luke read Gal 2 as reference to Titus' voluntary circumcision and used it as a basis for his story about Timothy's circumcision (Acts 16:1–3). Luke completely eliminated Titus from Acts because of his association with controversial situations (the Jerusalem meeting, the collection, the conflict at Corinth).

101 Martyn (1997, 200) believes the Galatian opponents had claimed that something similar to the Apostolic Decree was decided at the meeting.

If the uncircumcision of Gentiles was not at issue, why does Paul say he explained to the Pillars the gospel he preached among Gentiles (Gal 2:2)?¹⁰² Is he lying or was he not preaching uncircumcision yet at the time of the meeting? It is, in fact, stated in Gal 5:11 that Paul had “preached circumcision” before as a Christ-believer.¹⁰³ Ultimately the question boils down to what really constituted Paul’s gospel at this point in history. What role did uncircumcision play in it *prior to the Antioch incident and the Galatian crisis*? After all, Paul is even after these conflicts able to produce statements that relativize the significance of circumcision (1 Cor 7:19, Gal 6:15), while in Paul’s last letter circumcision has become a prominent symbol for boundary drawing between Jewish and Gentile Christ-believers (Phil 3:2). It seems clear that at least the Galatian believers did not have clear guidelines in the matter, since Paul needs to explicate it in his letter. Apparently, the question was not discussed to the fullest when the churches were founded.

The fact that mere preaching to Gentiles could also be a real question¹⁰⁴ at the meeting gains support from some NT material, where it is viewed negatively (e.g. Matt 10:5–6).¹⁰⁵ Historically, Jesus did not have much contact with Gentiles, but was driven by an eschatological vision of restoring the twelve tribes of Israel.¹⁰⁶ He also welcomed sinners (of Jewish background) to participate in the new kingdom through forgiveness of sins. As far as we know, Jesus himself uttered no specific vision concerning the Gentiles.¹⁰⁷ This would have constituted the ideological background of the Jerusalem church. Paul himself refers to the problem of preaching to Gentiles in 1 Thess 2:16, with no reference to circumcision.

102 Martyn (1997, 190) notes that Paul with his choice of verb ἀνατίθημι avoids the impression that he went to Jerusalem “cap in hand”. But the remainder of 2:2 (“in order to make sure that I was not running, or had not run, in vain”) indicates the opposite.

103 A reading not accepted by many commentators. See e.g. Elmer (2011, 140), who believes the reference can only be to Paul’s pre-Christian activity.

104 And, along with commensality, one that caused Paul to consider the possibility that, if not accepted, he had “run in vain” (2:2).

105 The passage belongs to Matthean special material, which, according to Painter, stems from the “circumcision faction” of James and Jerusalem (1999, 91). The passage, in its original context, restricts the mission to Israel. In the final (Petrine) form of Matthew the restricted mission is understood as the scope of the mission during the ministry of Jesus (Painter 1999, 93).

106 Räisänen 2010, 56–57.

107 According to Sanders (1985, 221) the later debates concerning Gentiles in the Christian movement make most sense “if we attribute to Jesus no explicit viewpoint at all”. Räisänen (2010, 252–253) agrees, and notes there are only two “solid” stories that illuminate the relationship between the historical Jesus and Gentiles, both healings from a distance (Mark 7:24–30 par and Q 7:1–10).

If the matter was discussed, the reasons Paul was able to invoke in favor of his case were reasonable and numerous enough to convince the Jerusalem leadership. These may have included arguments such as convincing spiritual phenomena among the Gentiles,¹⁰⁸ success in making converts among them, eschatological expectations relating to the Gentiles¹⁰⁹ and, last but not least, a promise of financial aid from them in the form of a collection. The first of these is one of Luke's favorite themes (Acts 10:47; 11:15–17; 15:8–9) and may be visible also in Paul's words in Gal 2:8, where he suggests that the Jerusalem leadership had to recognize that the same God was behind Paul's and Peter's similar results (Gal 2:7, 9).¹¹⁰ The second one is related to the first. The weight of the eschatological argument was probably enhanced by the proposed collection, which may have recalled Hebrew Bible images of the riches of the nations flowing to Jerusalem in the last days (Isa 60:5, 11) – not to mention the sheer persuasive force of the financial aid for the indigent Jerusalem church. Even though we cannot be sure that the converts were numerous at this point, the mere fact that Gentiles were responding positively to the Christ-message through Paul must have been exciting, especially when the Jews seemed to more skeptical towards the new movement.¹¹¹

Paul's view of the Gentiles was, quite obviously, positive, and he considered his own work among them essential in the end-time scheme (esp. Rom 15:16),¹¹² but this does not prove that the issue was nearly as self-evident to all others at the outset. It is plausible that the matter was discussed and given green light at the Jerusalem meeting: the Gentiles would be preached the Christ-message and Paul would be in charge of the mission. But this decision would not solve everything. There would still remain the big question of the *terms of entry* for the Gentiles in joining the people of God.

Verses Gal 2:7–9 offer more direct information about the decisions of the meeting. Here the decisions concerning the missions of Paul (and Barnabas) and Peter are depicted and juxtaposed chiasmatically. The latter is characterized thrice with the word ἡ περιτομή (circumcision) and the former once with ἡ ἀκροβυστία (uncircumcision) and twice with τὰ ἔθνη (Gentiles).

108 See Esler (1994, 35–71) on the significance of glossolalia and other spiritual manifestations for Gentile admission.

109 Traditional Jewish views on the subject vary greatly. In one portion of Jewish literature Gentiles are expected to be destroyed in the end-time (Ps. Sol. 17:24; 1QM; Jub. 24:29f), but in others there is lively expectation of their (eventual) subjugation and/or conversion (1 En. 90:33; Sib. Or. 3:710–20; Ps. Sol. 17:31; Isa 2:1–3; 49:6b; 60:6b, 2 Bar. 72–73). See Sanders 1992, 290–292.

110 Dunn 1993, 106.

111 Lüdemann 1989, 36.

112 "Paul's entire work, both evangelizing and collecting money, had its setting in the expected pilgrimage of the Gentiles to Mount Zion in the last days" (Sanders 1983, 171).

2:7

... πεπίστευμαι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς ἀκροβυστίας
καθὼς
Πέτρος τῆς περιτομῆς

2:8

... Πέτρῳ εἰς ἀποστολὴν τῆς περιτομῆς
... καὶ
ἐμοὶ εἰς τὰ ἔθνη

2:9

... ἡμεῖς εἰς τὰ ἔθνη
αὐτοὶ δὲ εἰς τὴν περιτομήν

In a literary critical sense, a division of some sort can be noted between the verses 2:7–8 and 2:9. In the latter the group of characters is widened to comprise, not only Peter and Paul, but also Barnabas on the one side, and James and John on the other. Peter is called “Cephas” in 2:9 but “Peter” in 2:7–8. Notably, James is listed first in 2:9 (cf. 1:18ff).¹¹³ Considerable discussion has taken place in scholarship over the possible traditional background(s) of this material. It has been suggested that Paul quotes or at least somehow reflects the actual legal language of the meeting. This would explain particularly well why Paul does not apply his usual wording but the Greek form “Peter” in 2:7–8.¹¹⁴ It has even been suggested that verses 2:7–8 derive from Paul’s first visit to Jerusalem with Peter (Gal 1:18ff) and reflect a private agreement made by Peter and Paul at that time. Verse 2:9 would be then added to this as a statement from the actual Jerusalem meeting.¹¹⁵ While this is difficult to prove, it can at least be noted that the very condensed nature of the sentences in the whole passage speak for a traditional background. Since the precise extent of the quotations/reflections cannot be solved, the strong presence of a Pauline element in the text must be allowed for.¹¹⁶

Two things relating to our question stand out from the text. It is clear that the two pairs in verses 2:8–9 denote ethnographical division.¹¹⁷ One mission is

¹¹³ See Betz (1979, 99–100) for literary critical analysis.

¹¹⁴ Paul, writing in Greek, would be quoting a Greek translation of the treaty. This was suggested by Erich Dinkler (1953–55), followed by e.g. Betz 1979, 97.

¹¹⁵ Lüdemann 1980, 86–101; Martyn 1997, 212.

¹¹⁶ I side with Betz (1979, 97), who sees that on the whole the passage is formulated by Paul, but that there are certain non-Pauline terms and concepts, which derive from the official document.

¹¹⁷ Betz 1979, 100; Lüdemann 1989, 37; Longenecker 1990, 59.

directed to the Jews, the other to the Gentiles. A geographical division has also been suggested,¹¹⁸ but seems unlikely in light of the choice of terms. While ἔθνη could perhaps denote nations outside the Palestine area, περιτομή is clearly ethnic in nature. John Painter has suggested that Paul does not denote only Gentiles with the word ἔθνη, but all nations, including Israel.¹¹⁹ Admittedly, ἔθνη can, in certain situations, mean “nations” more generally,¹²⁰ and Paul eventually did not shrink from converting Jews also, but in these verses the pairing with ἡ περιτομή makes the meaning suggested by Painter highly unlikely. It is not necessary to pin further quarrels on misunderstandings about the division of target-groups, either, as Painter does.¹²¹ If Paul’s words reflect the actual agreement, it seems that the division of audiences was clear enough for all to understand.

Verse 2:7, on the other hand, is not as straight-forward. It has been suggested that its genitive structure distinguishes between the ideological contents of the two missions (“a mission *of* circumcision” / “a mission *of* uncircumcision”). This could be supported by the difference in vocabulary (ἔθνη → ἀκροβυστία) as well as with the change from the εἰς + acc. construction to the genitive. Accordingly, it has been proposed that in the construction τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς ἀκροβυστίας the genitive should be read as a genitive of quality (“gospel of uncircumcision”) rather than an objective genitive (“gospel to/for the Uncircumcision”).¹²² Betz, for one, opts for the objective genitive, but admits this is the only place, where Paul uses the word ἀκροβυστία to denote the uncircumcised nations.¹²³ However, if read as a genitive of quality, this ambiguous and condense wording would alone have to bear the weight of the overall view that uncircumcision of Gentiles was decided at the meeting. Furthermore, the genitive of quality reading conveys an image that Paul’s gospel was *essentially* “the gospel of uncircumcision”. As was already pointed out above, while the matter of un/circumcision does appear prominently in Galatians and other *Kampfbriefe* (but not in 2 Cor!), it is not clear if the matter was central to Paul at the time of the

118 Lüdemann (1989, 12) notes that already Albrecht Ritschl proposed that there was only a misunderstanding about the geographical division of mission between Paul and James.

119 Painter 1999, 65–66.

120 Painter 1999, 61–62.

121 Painter (1999, 65–66) believes that verses 2:8–9 denote audience and that later quarrels between the two missions resulted from misunderstandings regarding this part of the agreement. Paul apparently assumed and expected that Peter’s “gospel of circumcision” would be limited to Jews only, although Paul himself never meant to preach uncircumcision to Gentiles exclusively – something Peter, for his part, expected of him.

122 Painter 1997, 65–66 “this statement makes no reference to audience”. Majority of interpreters take the objective genitive as the better option. See, e.g., Martyn 1997, 202.

123 Betz 1979, 96.

meeting. What we have here is probably an example of Paul's ability to use ambiguity of grammar to his advantage.

To conclude, the Jerusalem meeting seems not to have made an explicit decision to allow Paul to leave his Gentile converts uncircumcised – at least not permanently. However, it was decided that Paul and Barnabas would oversee a mission to the Gentiles and Peter of a mission to the circumcised. The division was ethnographical. It is important to note that the decision, if we take Paul to reflect the central wording of it in Gal 2:7–9, amounts to a *separation* of the missions.¹²⁴ It was proposed above that the reason leading to the meeting was that commensality was witnessed between Jewish and Gentile Christ-believers in Antioch. In this light, the basic decision of the meeting seems to have been to allow Gentile mission *per se*, but to insist that it be conducted separately from the Jewish one.¹²⁵ This separation would not be effective only on the level of general division of labor, but also on the more microscopic level of practical commensality – where the problem initially became concrete.¹²⁶ In the divided chronology of the Antioch episode, verses 2:11, 12b–14 provide strong evidence for this decision.

That a *division* of missions and tables was issued implies that the uncircumcised status of the Gentile converts was a reality. However, Paul's own account indicates that no decision was made that this was to be accepted as their permanent status. The expectation of Christ's imminent return may have removed any need for a long-term decision. On the other hand, the question of Paul's ultimate goal with the Gentiles as well as their relative status in comparison to Jews may have been considered self-evident by the Jerusalem leaders. It seems likely that the Gentile converts were viewed as Gentile God-fearers, who were a well-known phenomenon in Judaism. However, they were never considered on the same level as circumcised Jews. Their ultimate "perfection" would be understood to ensue only by way of circumcision and taking on the Mosaic Law. That Paul shared this view and eventually strove for it, would have been a very natural assumption by the Jerusalem church. It remains unclear what

124 This was already noted by Baur (1876, 125), who believed Jerusalem accepted that the Gentile converts would remain uncircumcised but insisted on the division of Jewish and Gentile churches. The decision was a concession on the part of the Jerusalem leaders. The two systems would coexist separately, but no "full reconciliation took place at this time between the opposing views and principles".

125 Sanders (1983, 181) is right in that Paul clearly identifies with a mission to the Gentiles and not the Jews (as witnessed by Rom 11:13, Gal 1:16; 2:2, 7–9, Rom 1:5, 13–14; 15:16, 18, 1 Thess 2:16), but there seem to have been instances where the division was not adhered to (1 Cor 9:19–23, 2 Cor 11:24). This, however, does not disprove that such a decision was made.

126 Pace Räisänen's suggestion that at the meeting "the conditions of common life were not clearly defined" (2010, 253).

Paul himself thought of the matter at the time, as we cannot take his views in Galatians as a neutral description of the situation during the time of the meeting. He may have agreed or disagreed with the Jerusalem leadership. It is possible that Paul later surprised everyone by insisting that the Gentile converts should forever remain Gentiles and, as such, be considered of equal standing with the Jews. In Galatians, however, Paul seems to take the silence on the matter as license for his own views.

3.3 *The Event after the Jerusalem Meeting, “The Antioch Incident Proper”*

It is proposed here that the events depicted in Gal 2:11, 12b–14 took place after the Jerusalem meeting. The core narrative reports that Peter and the Jewish Christ-believers of the Antioch church enacted the decisions of the meeting and withdrew from table fellowship with Gentiles.

It is remarkable that Paul in the text implies that the others actually broke the agreement. Paul explains he confronted Peter “to his face”, because Peter “stood self-condemned” for separating himself (2:11). By relating Peter’s *pre*-meeting willingness for table-fellowship (12a) in the midst of the story about the *after*-meeting separation without a note of the common decision in between, Paul creates an impression of an inconsistently acting and hypocritical Peter, who, accordingly, deserves to be condemned. Another standard for judging Peter is the “truth of the Gospel” (2:14) – which is subjective at best.

In reality, it was Paul himself who stood in opposition to the others in Antioch. It remains unclear whether Paul agreed or disagreed with the separation of tables and mission in Jerusalem (just like it is uncertain what Paul’s stance on circumcision was at the time). Inasmuch as his role there was to be an envoy of the Antioch church, he probably would not have had much say on the decision. In Antioch, however, he clearly disagrees. He will not accept separate tables. Even if there was still some unclarity for Paul on how to position Gentile believers in relation to Jewish ones, this practical decision would eventually lead him to view Gentile converts as on par with Jewish believers despite their state of uncircumcision. Opposition from others would serve to accelerate and accentuate the process.

4 The Galatian Crisis as a Corollary to the Jerusalem Meeting

4.1 *The Jerusalem Background of the Opponents in Galatia*

Looking into the Galatian crisis as reflected in Gal, there seems to be no reason to complicate the historical reconstruction with assumptions of some group

of opponents¹²⁷ outside the major characters already witnessed in connection with the Antioch incident and the Jerusalem meeting. Three observations support this: 1. The content of the letter strongly suggests that Paul is at odds directly with the Jerusalem leadership, which, as was noted above, had significant influence over the Antioch church. The two churches, thus, go together. 2. The assumption of a vague “third party” in the disagreements derives mainly from Luke’s account, which diminishes its historical value. 3. The South Galatian hypothesis explains why actions were quite naturally taken in Galatia in particular. From all this, it can be suggested that the Galatian crisis was a natural corollary to the Jerusalem meeting and the Antioch incident.

The main reason for positing that the Jerusalem and Antioch leadership was behind the Galatian crisis, comes from the letter itself. In Gal 1:8 Paul curses even “an angel from heaven” if it preaches against what Paul teaches. It can be gathered from this that the opponents had appealed to an authority, who was regarded as ranking higher than Paul. One is hard pressed here to think of anyone else but James and/or Peter.¹²⁸

It can also be pointed out that in Galatians Paul vacillates between admitting and denying the authority of the Jerusalem church. While at the time of the Jerusalem meeting Paul seems to have taken the authority of James and the Pillars for granted (Gal 2:2), this is not case anymore when he is writing Galatians (Gal 2:6).¹²⁹ That Paul devotes in his letter so much time and effort to repeating his past dealings with the Jerusalem church and his stance towards these authorities makes no sense, if the parties and persons involved were not relevant to the Galatian crisis.¹³⁰

¹²⁷ The term used of these people depends on whose viewpoint is followed. For Paul they are opponents, and this is also how he wants the Galatians to view them. Martyn (1997, 117) opts for the nomenclature “Teachers”, since he believes the persons depicted in the letter were active in a Gentile mission independently of Paul and should not be identified only on the basis of their relationship to him.

¹²⁸ It seems unnecessarily complicated to assume that the opponents are appealing to James deceitfully. Paul could quite easily point out an untruth like this.

¹²⁹ Taylor’s (2005, 111) notion that Paul is careful not to exhibit any hostility to the Jerusalem church and rather stresses the unity between himself and them, does not take into account Gal 2:6.

¹³⁰ Nanos (2002, 64, 66, 68) identifies Gal 1:12–2:14(17) as narrative material with no immediate connection to the situation of the addressees. The depiction of the Jerusalem meeting is, in Nanos’ view, offered to illustrate “a historical event the consequences of which are made explicit for the addressees”. I find this a tendentious interpretation designed to serve Nanos’ general stress on harmony between Paul and the Jerusalem church. Elmer (2011, 135, 147) sees the situation correctly: “The repeated focus on the apostolic community suggests that the spectre of the Jerusalem church and its leadership haunts the pages of

In Gal 1:6–7 Paul blames the Galatians for turning to “another gospel” (μετατίθεσθε ... εἰς ἕτερον εὐαγγέλιον). The wording naturally recalls the division of gospels at the Jerusalem meeting where a decision was made that he would be in charge of the “gospel to the Gentiles” (τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς ἀκροβυστίας) while Peter was allotted “the gospel to the Circumcision” (... τῆς περιτομῆς) (Gal 2:7–9). The ἕτερον εὐαγγέλιον at this point should be taken to denote the εὐαγγέλιον τῆς περιτομῆς in 2:7.¹³¹ It is remarkable that Paul scolds the Galatians for *defecting*¹³² from God¹³³ to this other gospel. Paul now denies that it has any part in Christ and nullifies its gospel-nature (ὁ οὐκ ἔστιν ἄλλο).¹³⁴ The representatives of the mission are also cursed for teaching what they believe (1:7–8). If the authority of James is referred to in 1:8, he is also cursed personally. A further reference to the Jerusalem church can be detected in Paul’s allegory of Sarah and Hagar (4:21–5:1). Here Paul states that Jerusalem and its children are in slavery. This “no doubt includes the church of that city.”¹³⁵

4.2 *The Unnecessary “Third Party”*

Despite this evidence, a very common and traditional view of the Galatian crisis has been that it did not explicitly have to do with the Jerusalem/Antioch churches. Often a vague “third party” of some kind is assumed behind the disturbance.¹³⁶ It is frequently claimed that a section of Jewish Christian conservatives was not happy with the decisions made by the Jerusalem meeting and,

this letter like no other in the Pauline corpus”, and “... Paul’s polemic [in Gal] is addressed directly at Jerusalem and its Law-observant program ...”.

131 Esler (1998, 72) believes “It is possible that the alternatives mentioned in 2:7–8, namely, ‘the gospel of the uncircumcised’ and ‘the gospel of the circumcised’ would have been taken by [Paul’s] Galatian audience as aptly distinguishing his version from that of his rivals, although the chasm between them was not necessarily as obvious at the time of the Jerusalem meeting as it later became.”

132 “μετατίθεσθε”. Martyn (1997, 108) proposes that the verb μετατίθημι should be understood and translated as “defecting”, since this is how conversion from one religion/philosophy was understood in the Hellenistic world.

133 “ἀπὸ τοῦ καλέσαντος ...”. “The one who called” refers to God.

134 The words ἕτερος and ἄλλος are virtual synonyms in Paul’s vocabulary (cf. 1 Cor 12:10, Blass and Debrunner 306.4). Elmer (2011, 134) notes that Paul’s use of the word “gospel” here clearly denotes that the opponents also preach Christ.

135 Esler 1994, 60 (quote) and 1998, 74.

136 Baur’s position was that a “third” conservative wing of the Jerusalem church was behind the mission to Galatia, but was not actively opposed by the Jerusalem leaders. It was only Baur’s son-in-law Eduard Zeller who suggested the Galatian opponents had the full support of James and Peter. J. B. Lightfoot was the first to oppose this Tübingen reading and actively promote a “third group”. For history of research see Longenecker 1990, xc. For modern readings assuming a “third group”, see Taylor 2005, 109.

consequently, begun a counter-mission in the Gentile and mixed churches founded by Paul. One of the major reasons behind this assumption probably lies with Luke's depiction, where those who demand circumcision are always unnamed, obscure outsiders – not identified with the “major players” (Act 15:1, 5; 21:20). Although Luke never depicts the Galatian crisis itself, he builds the foundation for an understanding that there was a “third party” to begin with.

What enabled Luke's depiction was probably Paul's own text in Galatians. It was already argued above that the “men from James” in 2:12a are in fact identical with the “false brethren” in 2:4. But Paul's convoluted chronology in describing the events provides the opportunity for Luke's interpretation. To make matters even more complicated, it may even have been Paul himself who was initially pressured to provide a reading which somehow “divided the ranks”. After all, he had to convince the Galatians that his agenda won at the meeting, but at the same time he needed to explain what the Galatians were presently experiencing.

It has been well established that Luke's depiction of the earliest church is heavily harmonizing. With his assumption of the “third party”, Luke may very well be projecting unto some outsiders the unpleasant facts he knew about his heroes. Curiously, Paul's letter to the Galatians gave some support for this reading. The stricter, anti-Pauline Jewish Christian stance was apparently well known in Luke's day, so that the topic could not be completely neglected. But to admit this stance was shared by the earliest church leadership in Jerusalem would have gone against Luke's idealistic views.

4.3 *The South Galatian Churches as Affiliates of Jerusalem and Antioch*

In order to clarify the background for the appearance of Jerusalem/Antioch representatives in Galatia, a brief look is necessary at the founding of the Galatian churches. The two major solutions offered both have ramifications for how Paul's relationship with the Jerusalem/Antioch leadership should be viewed at the time of the crisis. The so-called North Galatian hypothesis suggests that the churches of Galatia were in northern Asia Minor, near modern day Ankara. In this option, two passages in Acts, which depict Paul's visits to northern Asia Minor (Acts 16:6; 18:23), are understood as depictions of two distinct visits by Paul to the churches of Galatia prior to the situation described in the letter.¹³⁷ The founding visit (16:6) takes place during the “second

¹³⁷ Some, however, do not believe it necessary to assume two visits by Paul to Galatia before the crisis. Schnelle, for example, has not found traces of a second visit in the letter itself. He believes τὸ πρότερον in v. 4:13 can be translated simply “then, at that time” and does not necessarily imply there was also a second visit. Also, he believes verses 4:13–15, 18–19

missionary journey”, and the second visit (18:23) in the course of the “third missionary journey”.¹³⁸ This theory, opted by many,¹³⁹ locates the founding of the churches in the course of Paul’s independent missionary work.¹⁴⁰ The major argument has to do with the designation “Galatians” in the letter. It has been argued that Paul must denote ethnic Galatians, since this is how the term was normally used and understood at the time. Although the larger official Roman province was called Galatia, people would most naturally have associated the term with the historically and ethnically established meaning.¹⁴¹

The so-called South Galatian hypothesis takes into account the official Roman province of Galatia, which exceeds the limits of the ethnic Galatia and stretches all the way down to the areas of Pisidia, Lycaonia, Isauria, Paphlagonia, Galatia Pontica, and Pamphylia. In this hypothesis the Galatian churches are located more to the south. The most compelling evidence for this option has to do with Paul’s use of terminology: Paul always uses provincial names (Roman use of geographical terms) when speaking of his mission.¹⁴² Furthermore, Paul centered his work on large provincial cities rather than ethnic-geographical areas. Acts, for its part, mentions only South Galatian persons in connection with the delivery of the collection (20:4). If we take that the Galatian churches participated in the collection (which, of course, is by no means certain!), we may assume the churches were South Galatian. The presence of Jews and

refer only to the initial founding visit. Furthermore, he points to Paul’s mention of the swiftness of the Galatians in deserting the gospel (1:6). He also discards Acts’ evidence as redactional (Schnelle 2005, 268–269).

138 Esler (1998, 34, following Murphy-O’Connor) points out the agreement between Gal 4:13 and Acts 16:6–7, which together reveal the situation behind the founding of the Galatian churches: Paul was on his way west along the Cilician road, but something unexpected pushed him north to (probably) Pessinus. Both Gal and Acts suggest this was not a planned visit.

139 E.g. Betz 1979, 1–8; Martyn 1997, 16–17; Esler 1998, 32–36; Schnelle 2005, 268.

140 Schnelle suggests (2005, 268) that the letter itself also requires that Paul was the sole founder of the churches (Gal 1:1, 8–9; 4:12–14).

141 Schnelle 2005, 267. Luke, as well as other New Testament authors (e.g. 1 Pet 1:1), also use the term in the ethnic sense. Schnelle also notes that when Luke talks about the southern areas he uses the term Pisidia (Acts 13:14; 14:24), and when he depicts Paul’s travels in the north he clearly uses Galatia as a regional (and not provincial) designation (Acts 16:16; 18:23).

142 Longenecker 1990, lxx, who also points out that if Paul was addressing the South Galatian churches of Derbe, Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, “he could not well address their members by any single term except Galatians”.

Jewish synagogues suggested by the letter is also well attested in the south, whereas no Jews are known to us from the north.¹⁴³

The South Galatian hypothesis makes it possible that the Galatian churches were founded by Paul and Barnabas during the “first missionary journey” (Acts 13–14).¹⁴⁴ Paul’s repeated references to Barnabas (2:1, 9, 13) imply that he was well known to the addressees. Not only is the prominence of Barnabas important, but also the manner in which he is referred to.¹⁴⁵ The cities and place names reported by Acts in connection with this journey (Pamphylian Perge, Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe) are located in the area of the Roman province of Galatia.¹⁴⁶ According to Luke, these churches were visited by Paul also later, in the beginning of his solo career (Acts 15:36, 41; 16:1, 6) and, furthermore, in the beginning of his “third missionary journey” (Acts 18:23). Most importantly, Paul would at the time of the foundation of these churches still have been an apostle of the Antioch church,¹⁴⁷ a state of affairs which changed as a result of the Antioch incident. This would mean that Antioch was originally the parent community of the Galatian churches, while Paul, as a (co-)founder of the churches, would also consider himself their personal leader. Paul’s insistence in Gal on divine – rather than human – backing for his authority reflects his loss of Jerusalem/Antioch support and the ensuing debate for the legitimacy of his leadership in these churches (Gal 1:11–12, 16; 2:6).

Although Paul himself does not report a journey to the southern parts of Galatia before the Jerusalem meeting (Gal 1:21), the South Galatian option should be favored mainly because of the reference to Barnabas in Galatians. In both options, however, Paul would have been in contact with the churches after the Antioch incident and advocated commensality between Jewish and Gentile believers. However, what exactly he had taught about (un)circumcision remains unclear. While in both options the opponents come *to correct a situation of commensality* after the Jerusalem meeting, the North Galatian solution would imply that the Jerusalem/Antioch churches stretched further

143 Schnelle 2005, 266 notes correctly that this does not make more than an argument *e silentio*.

144 For further argumentation in favor of this view see Taylor 1992, 88–95. Taylor is followed by Dunn 1993, 90.

145 “So, when Paul writes that ‘even Barnabas’ was led astray, that would have been very meaningful to those who knew him well in southern Galatia ...” (Longenecker 1990, lxxi).

146 Schnelle (2005, 52–53) regards the mission to Cyprus in Acts 13–14 problematic, but thinks there is some reliable tradition behind Luke’s depiction of the first missionary journey in 45–47 CE.

147 It is interesting that Luke’s only designation of Paul and Barnabas as “apostles” appears in this connection (Acts 14:4; 14).

in their actions into areas where Paul had worked first. This means that Paul's warnings to the Macedonian church in Philippi may also be more acute.

4.4 *The Nature of the Crisis*

If the South Galatian hypothesis is followed, it is reasonable to assume that the developments in Galatia flowed naturally from the Jerusalem meeting and the Antioch incident. If the Galatian churches were subordinate affiliates of the Antioch church, the actions of the "opponents" may only have aimed at executing the decisions of the meeting in these churches as well. The main thrust would have been, in accordance with the decisions of the meeting, to completely separate the Gentile and Jewish missions as well as the table fellowship between the two groups. Paul's refusal in Antioch to comply with the decisions of the meeting would hasten the need to supervise the churches. The incident would also have generated hostility between the parties. The North Galatian option does not preclude that the same procedure is in action, it only removes the previous, close connection between the churches.

The separation of tables would naturally bring up the question of circumcision, as that would essentially solve the problem.¹⁴⁸ It was argued above that eventual circumcision of Gentile believers was probably an implicit assumption at the meeting, and perhaps something even Paul did not question at the time. Thus, the appearance of the question in Galatia is far less surprising than Paul makes it out to be. It seems the "opponents" even assumed that Paul himself agreed with this, and actually "preached circumcision" – something, which Paul, *in the Galatian context*, denies emphatically (Gal 5:11).¹⁴⁹ It is likely that Paul's reasoning and theology developed in combat with his adversaries, and that Galatians is probably the place where his insistence on uncircumcision first appears – to himself as well as others? – in such distinct form. It is now that circumcision becomes the central bone of contention: it is "forced"¹⁵⁰ on the Gentiles, who, if compliant, risk losing their status in Christ completely (Gal 2:21; 5:1–4).

148 Here I agree with Esler 1998, 73–74.

149 Howard (1979, 9–11) has suggested that the opponents were "Jewish Christian judaizers from Jerusalem who preached circumcision and who said that Paul did the same because he like them was dependent on the Jerusalem apostles for his gospel". Howard believes that the hostility visible in Gal was one-sided. He seems to assume that a positive decision was made for the uncircumcision of the Gentiles at the Jerusalem meeting, but that the opponents were not aware of it. Jewett (1971, 208) suggests the opponents' claim that Paul was on the same side with them was a "cunningly devised tactic", that is, they knew it not to be true.

150 Elmer (2011, 147–148) takes Paul's rhetorical reference at face value.

A further, social, motivation for complete conversion may be reflected in Gal 6:12 where Paul accuses the opponents of wanting to circumcise the Galatians only to avoid persecution. While Paul exaggerates when he claims this is their *only* motive,¹⁵¹ there is probably some truth to the statement. The only imaginable “persecution” of Jews for not requiring circumcision from Gentile converts can come from another Jewish source. What Paul is talking about is most likely the kind of synagogal discipline he himself experienced (2 Cor 11:24).¹⁵² Also, the Galatian Gentile believers themselves might have had social reasons for being interested in circumcision inasmuch as they could avoid an awkward and potentially dangerous liminal position by becoming full Jews (see ch. 3). Gal 4:17 may contain echoes of discussion about what would be “good” for the Galatians.

4.5 *Philip Esler and Social Identity in Galatians*

Philip Esler is probably the first to engage in a thorough analysis of the Galatian situation from the viewpoint of social identity theory (*Galatians*, 1998). According to Esler, Paul’s aim in the letter is to reinforce the boundaries between the ingroup against the outgroup which threatened the distinct identity of the ingroup. Esler assumes that in Galatia there were mixed communities of Christ-believers (the ingroup),¹⁵³ who experienced pressure from Jewish¹⁵⁴ Christ-believers and non-believers¹⁵⁵ to have the Gentile members circumcised and join the Jewish people.¹⁵⁶ In SIA terminology, this means that the opponents were “inviting the gentiles among [Paul’s] addressees to take on the social identity of Israelites, an identity with many desirable attributes, by initially accepting one of the key elements which made that group distinctive,

151 According to Betz (1979, 315) the restrictive *μόνον* is “argumentative and not simply informative”.

152 Betz 1979, 315–316; Dunn 1993, 336–337. Longenecker (1990, 291) ties this to “the rising tide of nationalism in Palestine” (cf. Jewett, 1971, 206). Esler (1998, 73–74) suggests “Israelite Christ-followers from elsewhere or local Galatian Israelites”. Martyn (1997, 561–562) believes the “False brethren” were the source of persecution for the “Teachers” in Galatia.

153 Esler 1998, 36. It is noteworthy that a main feature of this ingroup was that the central markers of the outgroups ceased to have significance *inside* the boundaries of the ingroup (see Gal 5:6).

154 Esler uses “Israelite” in this study. See ch. 1 n. 2 for discussion on terminology.

155 Esler 1998, 73–74 reads Gal 6:12 as denoting that the Israelite members of the mixed communities were pressured by local Israelites or Israelite Christ-followers from Jerusalem, or both, to circumcise the Gentiles in the communities. Esler sees the recurring appearance of Jerusalem in negative light in the letter as evidence for the involvement of its church in the matter.

156 Esler 1998, 36, 72.

circumcision.”¹⁵⁷ From Paul’s point of view the ingroup formed by the mixed community of Christ-believers was in danger of dissolving into the Jewish outgroup, which apparently enjoyed a higher status. Esler believes that the demand of circumcision may also have threatened to send some of the Gentile members back to the non-believing Gentile outgroup.¹⁵⁸

Paul’s strategy in the letter is to fight this perceived threat of *social mobility* by creating and strengthening a positive ingroup identity for the Galatian communities. He thus exerts pressure on the addressees to prevent them from leaving the group and opts for *social change* methods to enhance their positive self-image. This is managed, firstly, by the constant use of collective designations that denote the recipients’ distinctive and positive ingroup identity. The recipients are called, for example, “brothers” (1:11; 3:15; 4:12 etc.), “my children” (4:19), “sons of God” (3:26), “seed of Abraham” (3:29), “a new creation” (6:15) and “Israel of God” (6:16). Many of these designations also establish what Esler calls a “fictive kinship”.¹⁵⁹ Thus, Paul draws on the general collective nature of the Ancient Mediterranean society and the central role of family in it.¹⁶⁰

In fighting the threat posed by the Jewish outgroup, Paul engages both in *social competition* and *social creativity*. This is a normal finding in situations where the possibility of a real change in the statuses between the in- and outgroups cannot be conceived with certainty.¹⁶¹ In Esler’s view, *social competition* is in action when Paul claims righteousness for his congregations of Christ-followers and denies it from the Jews. Esler remarks that “the evident appeal of the prize of righteousness” made it impossible for Paul to ignore the subject. Paul simply had to “wrest it from [the Israelites] for his congregations, never mind how challenging the objective might be”.¹⁶² Paul redefines the term “righteousness” and gives it a non-nomistic meaning. According to Esler it has neither a Lutheran forensic meaning nor an ethical sense but is rather just “descriptive of a privileged identity”.¹⁶³

157 Esler 1998, 72. From a point of view of *social mobility* Esler (1998, 51) suggests the Israelites are offering mass admission to the Gentile Christ-believers through the individual acts of circumcision.

158 Esler 1998, 51, 92.

159 Elmer (2011, 130) takes kinship language in Gal as one of the main hermeneutical keys to the letter. According to him, Paul applies this metaphor to radically reinterpret the traditional kinship thinking related to Abraham, which had no room for Gentiles.

160 Esler 1998, 224.

161 Esler 1998, 52.

162 Esler 1998, 169–170.

163 Esler 1998, 175–176.

The Mosaic Law, then, is something that Paul does not adopt for his ingroup.¹⁶⁴ Paul states quite unambiguously that it does not produce righteousness – only faith in Christ does (2:16; 3:11; 5:4–5). Extreme outgroup denigration and stereotyping take place when Paul gives the Mosaic Law a completely negative role as a source of curse for those under it (3:10).¹⁶⁵ Neither does the Law generate heirship of Abraham (3:18a),¹⁶⁶ which is realized only through God's promise to Abraham before the time of the Law. This way, Paul again shifts a central positive feature of the outgroup for his own ingroup through redefinition.¹⁶⁷

In Esler's view Paul engages in *social creativity*, when he emphasizes the Spirit as a positive marker of the ingroup identity. The idea of being led by the Spirit of the Lord was something both the in- and outgroup regarded positive at the outset, hence Paul only brought to the game a new dimension of comparison with the outgroup.¹⁶⁸ Life outside the Law, on the other hand, was something extremely negative from the Jewish point of view. Paul redefines life outside the Law positively as "freedom" (2:4 etc.) (a "black is beautiful"-argument).¹⁶⁹

Paul, thus, assumes righteousness, kinship of Abraham, freedom, and the Spirit as positive, strengthening features for the ingroup. But the flipside of the coin is inevitable: the outgroup is denigrated respectively. Its high status

¹⁶⁴ Esler (1998, 182–183) insists that Paul does not envisage a distinction between the ceremonial and ethical parts of the Law (cf. Dunn 1990), but rather discards the Law completely. He backs this assumption both with theological insights from the text and with the agnostic nature of Mediterranean culture, which, in Esler's view, is more likely to produce stark antitheses (the Law was either accepted as a whole or discarded as a whole). As for the controversial verse Gal 5:14, Esler does not believe it reveals that Paul thought the ethical side of the law remained valid. He sees the verse as "acknowledging that the best the law can provide is love of one's neighbour (*agape*)" while Paul insists that "such love is available within the congregations from an entirely different source – the Spirit." (1998, 203–204). Paul's statement on the "law of Christ" in Gal 6:2 does not, according to Esler, refer to a reinterpretation or reduction of the actual content of the Mosaic law: the statement is simply "a striking metaphor for the way in which love, the first fruit of the Spirit, becomes the guiding force in the life of those who are in Christ" (1998, 231).

¹⁶⁵ Esler 1998, 184–185.

¹⁶⁶ The idea of limited good is represented by the indivisibility of the inheritance: there is only one heritage and one heir, whose descendants can receive it. Esler also points out, that in the OT the inheritance is something concrete: offspring and land (Gen 15:5–18). Paul, on the other hand, uses the concept as "a master designation for a cluster of desirable attributes attached to those who have faith in Christ" (Esler 1998, 193).

¹⁶⁷ Esler 1998, 179.

¹⁶⁸ Esler 1998, 52.

¹⁶⁹ Esler 1998, 53.

needs to be diminished and the difference between the groups accentuated.¹⁷⁰ Paul manages this through the use of binary oppositions, which represent rigid stereotyping: while the ingroup enjoys “freedom”, the outgroup suffers “slavery” (the Jews are slaves to the Law, the Gentiles to idols); while the ingroup possesses the Spirit and the promise, the outgroup dwells in “flesh”; while the ingroup consists of Abraham’s true heirs, the outgroup are only sons of the slave woman Hagar, and cannot share in the inheritance; and when the ingroup reaches righteousness through faith, the outgroup, through the Law, fails to reach the same goal.¹⁷¹

Esler’s observations concerning the main exigence as well as Paul’s measures in persuading the addressees are for the most part transferable to the historical situation established above in this study. A few differences, however, need to be noted. Esler stresses the pressure on the Galatian Gentile believers from local Christ-believing Jews, who, in turn, were pressured by local non-believing Jews, as well as some persons with possible connections to the Jerusalem church. While this is realistic, the role of the Jerusalem/Antioch leadership was given more emphasis above. It is significant for the overall situation that the weight of authority is on the side of the “opponents”, who had good grounds to display Paul as a deviant of some sort, given that he had rejected the decision made at the Jerusalem meeting. The status of the outgroup was higher, not only for theological and general social reasons, but because it was backed by the Jerusalem/Antioch leadership.

Furthermore, in the South Galatian scenario in particular, the division between in- and outgroups may not have been altogether clear to the addressees, whose churches were established when disagreement between the opposing parties had not yet arisen. In the current situation, after the break-up with the Antioch church, Paul would have had to develop new boundaries. Esler, too suspects that Paul’s constant need to point out the distinctive group identity of the Galatian Christ-believers reveals that they had not, in fact, gained a stable “third group” identity. He, however, sees the need for definition more in relation to the Jewish groups in the local Galatian environment.¹⁷² While this may be true as well, the above scenario makes it likely that boundary-drawing would be needed especially with regard to the Jerusalem/Antioch churches. The new ingroup would essentially constitute of those faithful to Paul’s leadership. Accordingly, the letter demonstrates Paul’s effort to legitimate his leadership by direct connection to God (1:1).

170 Esler 1998, 184–185.

171 Esler 1998, 208.

172 Esler 1998, 36–39, 89.

The historical reconstruction above is in agreement with Esler's suggestion that circumcision arose as the *solution* to commensality and was not the initial problem in itself. According to Esler, Paul's message of uncircumcision was, however, already well formulated during the founding visit to the Galatian churches. It was argued above that, while Paul rejected the decision about separated tables in Antioch, it is possible that the question of circumcision was not very acute until the time of the Galatian crisis. The letter, then, may demonstrate Paul's initial attempt to make circumcision vs. uncircumcision a central antithesis between the in- and outgroups. Eventually, uncircumcision would become a central identifier for Pauline Christ-believers of Gentile background.

5 Paul and the Jerusalem Community after the Last Visit to Jerusalem

The most significant later development between Paul and the Jerusalem community (and its sympathizers/affiliates) took place during Paul's last visit to Jerusalem. For this to be reflected in Philippians, it is not necessary to decide between the Roman and Caesarean locations, since in both cases the letter comes after the event.

It was decided above that it is among the historically most certain decisions by the Jerusalem meeting that Paul would conduct a collection for the Jerusalem "poor". Both Luke and Paul testify that, despite the subsequent conflicts between the parties, Paul did not give up the project. In fact, he seems to have been increasingly busy with it. Paul's letters prove that "the delivery of the collection must have become a matter of great urgency".¹⁷³ in 1 Cor 16:3–4 it is to be delivered by a delegation, which Paul will accompany only if needed, but in 2 Cor 8:19–20 Paul is already convinced he himself must go. The letter Paul sent to the Roman churches just before heading from Corinth to Jerusalem reveals that he worried about the fate of the collection (Rom 15:25–33).¹⁷⁴ Clearly, the collection was a symbol of unity and represented for Paul a chance to "re-establish relations with the original church in Jerusalem".¹⁷⁵

Paul's hopes and plans, however, failed. From Luke's depiction of Paul's last visit to Jerusalem in Acts 21 it can be gathered that the collection was not

¹⁷³ Schnelle 2005, 360.

¹⁷⁴ Rom 15:31 represents Paul's fear that the collection will not be accepted. According to Räisänen (2010, 63) this was "a fear that probably came true".

¹⁷⁵ Schnelle 2005, 363. The collection was "a tangible demonstration of the (eschatological) unity of the one church composed of Jews and Gentiles" (Lüdemann 1989, 59).

accepted by the Jerusalem church.¹⁷⁶ While Luke seems aware of the existence of the collection (Acts 24:17),¹⁷⁷ he is conspicuously silent about its delivery and reception.¹⁷⁸ This is best explained as another example of Luke's reticence about embarrassing matters.¹⁷⁹ Luke's "primary purpose is to show the good relationship between Paul and the Jerusalem church."¹⁸⁰ Had the collection been accepted, he would have had every reason to parade it. But to admit it was rejected would have contradicted Luke's view of a united and harmonious early church.¹⁸¹

It is likely that Luke also reveals something about *why* the Jerusalem community was unwilling to associate with Paul. He has James report to Paul that there are thousands of Jewish believers in Judea, who have been taught that Paul teaches apostasy from Moses and tells Jews not to circumcise their children (Acts 21: 20–21). For Luke the accusations are, of course, false rumors.¹⁸² Luke also takes care to distance this problematic tradition as far away from James and the Jerusalem church as possible.¹⁸³ The recipient of the rumors is a group of Christ-believing Jews who are not directly associated with James. It is remarkable that, just as in the story of the Jerusalem meeting, here, too, Luke alienates the troublesome believers from James and the Jerusalem church, and makes them appear as an outsider "third party". While Luke is careful not to claim that even the recipients of the rumor actually believe it, historically, however, the text should be taken as "reflecting not only the hostility of Jews

176 Thus, Pervo 2006, 95–96. Some, like Becker (1993, 457), leave the fate of the collection undecided.

177 Accordingly, it is evident that Luke's source contains knowledge of the collection (and also of its rejection). This means that Luke is consciously revising his source (Lüdemann 1989, 60–61). Downs (2008, 61) is a rare exception in doubting that Luke had any knowledge of the collection ("Unfortunately, the author of Acts makes no mention of Paul's collection for Jerusalem anywhere in his narrative.") According to him, the mention of almsgiving in Paul's speech to Felix should be viewed as part of Luke's portrayal of "Paul's piety, which is achieved through the depiction of his actions in Jerusalem as nothing more than peaceful worship offered by a devout Jew" (2008, 67). See Downs (2008, 63 n. 85) for an extensive list of scholars who take Acts 24:17 as a reference to the collection.

178 Schnelle 2005, 361.

179 In fact, Leppä (2002, 96–97) argues that Luke used Gal 2:1–10 to create the famine relief story in Acts 11:27–30 (although he does not see the story as solely a replacement for the collection). See also Pervo (2006, 79) for Luke's verbal dependence on Paul there.

180 Lüdemann 1989, 61.

181 Schnelle 2005, 362.

182 Historically, however, "the evidence of Paul's letters suggests that the rumor was justified" (Painter 1999, 55).

183 Luke must receive the rumors about Paul from traditional material, since his Paul has so far done nothing to merit such accusations (Lüdemann 1989, 56–57).

but also the strong reservations of Jewish Christians in Jerusalem regarding Paul.”¹⁸⁴ Thus, it seems likely that the rumors also reflect the stance of James and the Jerusalem community.

While the resentment towards Paul in the Jerusalem church largely stemmed from previous disagreements, there were political factors as well that made it disadvantageous for the local Jewish Christ-believers to associate themselves with Paul. Paul himself testifies that he was worried about the Judean non-believers, from whose hands he prayed to be “saved” (Rom 15:31). This reflects the situation in the mid-sixties and approaching the Jewish War, when there was an increase in Jewish nationalism and a renewed emphasis on upholding Jewish customs and traditions. There is reason to believe that the Jerusalem church shared in this trend as well. But even if it did not, the political climate was such that they could not have risked being associated with Paul, the alleged apostate.

There is some further evidence to support the notion of a rift between Paul and the Jerusalem community at this point in history. To be sure, Paul’s arrest and imprisonment were clearly initiated by the non-believing Jews and executed by the Roman authorities.¹⁸⁵ The Jewish non-believers delivered Paul to the Romans. However, it is significant that even Luke does not report any effort on the part of the Jerusalem community to help or even to support Paul.¹⁸⁶ In this light, it is reasonable to conclude that during Paul’s last visit to Jerusalem the relationship between Paul and the Jerusalem Christ-believing community “developed into open hostility”.¹⁸⁷ As will be suggested below, this state of affairs is reflected in the only available document written by Paul after the incident, the letter to the Philippians.

184 Schnelle 2005, 361.

185 Painter (1999, 56–57) toys with the idea that James and the elders directed Paul to the Temple while being fully aware that it would cause problems for him. Pervo (2006, 96) is more cautious: “... it is very likely that James’ rejection of this offering resulted in some incident that brought about the arrest of Paul”. H. Leppä (2002, 170) concludes that “knowing or not knowing, meaning or not meaning, the elders did, according to Acts, send Paul into a trap”.

186 Lüdemann 1989, 61; Painter 1999, 56–57; Schnelle 2005, 362.

187 Schnelle 2005, 362.

PART 4

Analysis of Philippians



Introducing the Opponents: Inclusiveness for the Sake of Self-Enhancement (Phil 1:15–18a)

1 Introduction

Opponents appear in the letter to the Philippians for the first time already in 1:15–18a. When discussing how his imprisonment has actually advanced the gospel (1:12), Paul mentions that many “brothers” have been encouraged by his chains to preach more fearlessly (1:14). While some of these brothers work sincerely (ἀληθείᾳ, 1:18) and out of goodwill (δι’εὐδοκίαν, 1:15) and love (ἐξ ἀγάπης, 1:16), it is disclosed that certain others, in fact, preach out of false, schismatic motives. According to Paul, these negative characters proclaim Christ out of envy and rivalry (διὰ φθόνον καὶ ἔριν, 1:15), and are motivated by factional ambition (ἐξ ἐριθείας, 1:17). They act on a pretext (προφάσει, 1:18), and want to cause Paul harm in his chains (οἰόμενοι θλίψιν ἐγείρειν τοῖς δεσμοῖς μου, 1:17). Contrarily, the “good brothers” are favorably disposed to Paul and “know” that he is imprisoned for the defense of the gospel (εἰδότες ὅτι εἰς ἀπολογίαν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου κεῖμαι, 1:16).

It has proven difficult to identify the opponents in this passage, and suggestions have varied accordingly.¹ As with the other polemical passages in Phil, the main difficulty has had to do with the highly conventional – and, consequently, poorly informative – nature of the description. Furthermore, interpretation has often been guided by the presupposition that the opponents are locals wherever the letter is written.² In this case, whatever is assumed of the previous history of Christ-believing communities at the suggested location has tended to dominate the interpretation. Gordon D. Fee, for example, sees the

1 Reumann (2008, 203–204) lists the following ten previous proposals: 1) pagan agitators, 2) Jews, 3) Judaizing Christians, 4) zealot Christians, 5) Christians jealous of Paul, 6) itinerant Christian missionaries with a divine-man theology, 7) Gnostic Christians, 8) some who were “denouncing the Jews who had secured Paul’s imprisonment”, 9) some who claim Paul is imprisoned for a personal crime, 10) some who criticize Paul for appealing to his Roman citizenship. See (my) Pehkonen (2008) for a fuller exposition of the currently most common solutions. Personal, as opposed to “doctrinal”, animosity towards Paul is the most popular starting point nowadays.

2 E.g. according to Reumann (2008, 202) the identity of the opponents “intertwines with where they are located”.

passage as an extension of the dispute between the “weak” and the “strong” in the Roman church, which Paul had already addressed in Romans.³ That Paul describes the opponents as somehow in opposition to his imprisonment (1:14) has also affected interpretations about their character. Robert Jewett speculates that the opponents are *divine men* missionaries who criticize Paul for displaying unapostolic weakness by his imprisonment.⁴ Even more attention has been given to the fact Paul is not unequivocally negative towards the opponents but includes them among “brothers” who proclaim Christ (1:14). Notably, he also insists that he can even rejoice in their preaching activity (1:18a). Furthermore, it has been noted that Paul does not make any comment about the content of the opponents’ message.⁵ These inclusive statements have been the main reason for not identifying the opponents with the “dogs”, “evil workers”, and “enemies of the cross” mentioned in Phil 3.⁶

There are, however, good reasons to question these previous solutions. The present chapter will, in fact, swim against the current trend and argue that the “bad” brothers in Phil 1:15–18a are the same Jewish Christ-believers who appear in Phil 3.⁷ The main reason has to do with the rhetoric of the passage. It will be argued below that the different slant here, in the beginning of the letter, should be understood as Paul’s attempt to strengthen his own *ethos* and

3 Fee (1995, 122–123) assumes Paul found out upon his arrival in Rome that his earlier attempt in Rom to mediate between the groups had not been successful. On the contrary, the Jewish Christian “weak” brothers had further sharpened their stance and now viewed Paul’s imprisonment as an opportunity to preach their own beliefs even more emphatically. Bockmuehl (1997, 76–78) and Witherington (2011, 81) view the situation quite similarly. Beare (1959, 59–60) and Vincent (1985, 18–19), both writing considerably earlier than Fee, also situate Philippians in Rome and believe Paul refers to local Christ-believers in 1:15ff. Both take up the fact that the church in Rome had not had a well-established leadership before Paul arrived on the scene. This is then believed to have caused jealousy and rivalry in the local group leaders, which in turn resulted in their attempt to prove themselves equals of Paul by increased evangelism.

4 Jewett 1979, 368.

5 Hooker 2002, 378–379: “personal rivalry rather than doctrinal opposition”, “no criticism of the content of this group’s preaching”. Similarly Witherington 2011, 80. Bormann (2012, 232) states that “it does not appear to be a matter of fundamental controversies; if this were so Paul’s mild criticism would be inexplicable”.

6 So e.g. Hooker 2002, 378–379.

7 Some older commentators allow for the same opponents here, especially Baur (1875, 65). Lohmeyer (1954, 46–47) explains Paul’s lighter stance on Judaizers with two factors: Paul faced martyrdom and no longer stood in combat over his gospel (“Pls steht nicht mehr in dem Kampf um sein Evangelium.”) but also did not enjoy the authority of a founder of the local (Caesarean) church. Lohmeyer does not, however, read Judaizers, but Jews, in Phil 3 and, thus, makes the comparison to Paul’s other correspondence. Lightfoot (1900, 88–90) reads without further ado “Judaizers” here as well as in Phil 3.

to heighten his status in light of the recent negative developments with the Jerusalem church and its affiliates. One of the ways Paul ventures to do this is by a show of goodwill toward the opponents. When he insists he can rejoice in the opponents' work, he creates an image of himself as one who is dedicated solely to the cause of the gospel and above intergroup animosities. It also creates an impression that Paul's status is so much higher and securer than the opponents' that he can *afford* to act detached. Thus, the allegedly more lenient attitude is, in reality, a tactical procedure and does not provide a realistic reflection of the actual underlying hostilities. At the same time, however, it also needs to be pointed out that the text itself is not as lenient as often thought:⁸ polarizing and denigrating elements still abound.

An additional reason for identifying the same opponents behind 1:15–18a and Phil 3 is provided by the way Paul himself explains the changed tone in Phil 3:1: he admits that he is resuming “the same things”, but clarifies that this time the harsher words are meant “for the safety” of the Philippians. In the following, this observation will be discussed first, followed by the textual analysis of the opponents in 1:15–18a.⁹

2 The Same Opponents in Phil 1:15–18a and Phil 3

2.1 From “Brothers” to “Dogs” (Phil 3:1)

It will be argued in this chapter that Paul himself in Phil 3:1 signals that he will in the following (Phil 3) address the same problem as before in 1:15–18a, only in a harsher manner. The verses 2:25–30, immediately preceding 3:1, deal with Epaphroditus and form a coherent whole. On the other side, verse 3:2 embarks with the well-known warning about the “dogs, evil workers and the Mutilation”. Consequently, verse 3:1 forms a kind of hinge. The text reads as follows:

8 Noted also by Fee 1995, 121 n. 22: “the *language* Paul uses to describe their motivation is that of *indictment*, not amelioration” (emphases his).

9 Barclay's criterion of consistency may be taken up as additional justification for identifying same opponents behind Phil 3 and 1:15–18a. According to the criterion new groups should not be posited unless the text clearly requires it. However, artificial fractioning of the text has not been the main problem here like, for example, inside Phil 3. The text is spatially removed from the polemical instances in Phil 3 and sufficiently different to warrant reservation towards identifying the same group of opponents.

3:1a τὸ λοιπόν, ἀδελφοί μου, χαίρετε ἐν κυρίῳ.

So then/from now on, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord!¹⁰

3:1b τὰ αὐτὰ γράφειν ὑμῖν ἐμοὶ μὲν οὐκ ὀκνηρόν, ὑμῖν δὲ ἀσφαλές.

I do not hesitate to write the same things to you, and for you it is a safeguard.

or:

It is not irksome for me to write the same things to you, and for you it is a safeguard.

(The translation of 3:1b will be discussed below)

The verse consists of two sentences. Different suggestions have been made concerning their outside referent(s) as well as their mutual relationship.¹¹ Among the rhetorically more advanced solutions is that of J. T. Reed, who argues that 3:1b is a variation of the ancient epistolary “hesitation formula” and, together with 3:1a, should be read in connection with the preceding section concerning Epaphroditus (2:25–30).¹² According to Reed, the ancient hesitation formula receives its name from its key component, the verb *ὀκνέω* (“to shrink from doing, to scruple, hesitate to do a thing”, LS). There are basically two usages of the formula, requests and notifications. In the first, the author asks the recipient not to hesitate concerning some matter, most usually to write the sender back or inform him/her about his/her needs. In this case *ὀκνέω* often appears together with the infinitive form of *γράφω* and the formula serves the function of maintaining the relationship between the author and the recipient(s).¹³ There are also stronger requests, where the author demands the recipient to do something asked for in the letter.¹⁴

The formulas of notification “reveal the sender’s desire to take some course of action on behalf of the recipient”.¹⁵ Reed claims this is the usage in Phil 3:1b and translates “To write the same things to you is, with respect to me, not a cause of hesitation”.¹⁶ Most commentaries and translations do not take into account the possibility of the formula and understand the adjective *ὀκνηρός* in

10 For discussion about the correct translation of 3:1a, see ch. 3 where the unity of the letter was addressed.

11 Many suggestions have had implications on the unity of the letter.

12 Baur’s (1875, 53) solution for 3:1b is sympathetic. He sees the sentence as a reflection of the pseudonymous writer’s uncertainty of his skills.

13 Reed (1996, 66–68) gives several examples, e.g. PNeph 5.17 *περὶ ὧν χρεῖα σοὶ ἐστὶν ἐν τῇ Ἀλεξανδρίᾳ, μὴ ὀκνεῖ γράφειν* (“Concerning which things you need in Alexandria, do not hesitate to write”).

14 Reed 1996, 68–70.

15 Reed 1996, 70. For examples, see Reed 1996, 70–71.

16 Reed 1996, 89.

its basic dictionary meaning, “troublesome”, “irksome”, “onerous”.¹⁷ On a textual level the difference does not seem great. For our purposes, however, the question relates to the informativeness of the passage. If the text is a completely conventional formula, as Reed seems to suggest, the sentence is less informative of the situation behind the letter. However, it should not go unnoticed that the use of an *adjective* of the *ὀκν*-root is unprecedented in hesitation formulas. Reed himself admits this and assumes that Paul must be heavily modifying the formula.¹⁸ Accordingly, it can be concluded that while there is enough evidence to assume that Paul is *drawing on* the hesitation formula, it is still presented in such an unorthodox way as to allow different meanings for *ὀκνηρός* – including the more literal one. In this case, the word may indicate Paul’s actual uneasiness about discussing the opponents.

The action Paul “unhesitatingly” takes for the recipients (or does not feel troublesome to do) is “to write the same things” (τὰ αὐτὰ γράφειν) for the Philippians. The next important question is what Paul refers to with these “same things”. Reed goes on to suggest that this refers to the exhortation to rejoice in 3:1a. He then attempts to support this with a milder reading of *ἀσφαλές* as “steadfastness” or “stability”, since an exhortation to rejoice could hardly be for the “safety” of the addressees. But Reed is forced to admit that “Paul does not specify how rejoicing will produce steadfastness”.¹⁹ In addition to this problematic, Reed’s reading does ultimately not succeed in sufficiently incorporating the warning in 3:2.²⁰ A reference is only made to the sequence of imperatives begun in 2:19²¹ and the practice of producing positive and negative models in friendship letters (Epaphroditus vs. the opponents).²²

There have been other suggestions for the referent of τὰ αὐτὰ, both external and internal to the text. In addition to Paul’s exhortations to rejoice, references

17 LS gives two meanings for the adjective: 1) shrinking, hesitating, back-ward, unready, timid, 2) things that cause fear, are vexatious, are troublesome.

18 Reed 1996, 74–75. The fact that Reed is able to propose that the different sentence structure still produces a similar reading (adjective functioning as substantive) does not change this fact.

19 Reed 1996, 77–78. Bockmuehl (1998, 180–181) shares the problem.

20 In fact, Linko (2008, 160–161) shares Reed’s reading in connecting 3:1a and 3:1b with 2:25–30, but uses this to support a major break between 3:1b and 3:2 which for him legitimizes the disunity of the letter. Also Reumann (2008, 456–458), a proponent of the disunity of Philippians, sees the whole of 3:1 as belonging to letter B (1:1–3:1, likely parts of 4:1–9, 4:21–23) with 3:1b as an “irenic move by Paul, playfully to drive home *rejoice in the Lord*”.

21 “... the reworked hesitation formula punctuates a series of present-tense exhortations” (Reed 1996, 89).

22 Reed 1996, 86.

to opponents inside and outside of the letter have been proposed.²³ Reference to opponents is a particularly credible option, especially when ἀσφαλές is given a stronger meaning (“safeguard”, “safety”). Demetrius K. Williams has proposed that with this particular word Paul may be reflecting the opponents’ claims that circumcision would bring “safety” for the Gentile Christ-believers inside the Jewish *politeuma*.²⁴ While there is no reason to doubt that Paul had opportunities to talk about the opponents to the Philippians outside this particular letter,²⁵ it is simpler to see a connection to the beginning of the letter 1:15–18a.²⁶ Paul has mentioned the same people just a while ago, but now feels motivated to do so again, only with a different tone. As in 1:15–18a, so in 3:1 Paul seems also to be struggling with a certain embarrassment with regard to the opponents. In Phil 3:1 he explicitly denies feeling awkward. This is understandable, if there is a failed last visit to Jerusalem and a rift with the Jerusalem Christ-believers in the background. Most importantly, Paul himself now also offers an explanation for the change between 1:15ff and the harsher 3:2ff: he is picking the theme up again, but now in a harsher tone, for the safety of the Philippians.²⁷

The function of verse 3:1a with its summons to rejoice is still to be explained. There is a transitional element at the beginning of the verse indicated by τὸ λοιπόν. The meaning and function of the particle has been much discussed. It was already ruled out above (ch. 3), that it means “finally” as in indication of a letter ending. However, it can have a similar meaning as in the last in a list²⁸ or as denoting logical conclusion (“therefore”, “and so”).²⁹ As such, it could simply summarize what was said previously about Epaphroditus’ recovery from a near fatal illness. Reed has suggested that the particle may also denote the

23 See Reed 1996, 79 for list. E.g. Witherington (2011, 184) points out that “reminding the audience of something, *followed by* the reminder, is in fact a rhetorical convention.” According to him, “the reference to the ‘same things’ in 3:1b refers to the warning in 3:2ff which Paul has given them before in some form or fashion”.

24 Williams (2002, 150–151) points out that the safety of the *polis* was frequently used as a *topos* in political rhetoric. He suggests a connection between 3:1 and 3:19, where Paul stresses the believers’ heavenly *politeuma*. Tellbe (2001, 264) believes the use of ἀσφαλές “alludes to the fact that the message of the opponents had the potential to create social protection”.

25 Thus, Williams 2002, 152.

26 Bockmuehl (1998, 180–181) opts for reading τὰ αὐτά as a reference to the exhortation to rejoice, because he finds no reference to Judaizers in the first two chapters of Phil.

27 Fee (1995, 292 esp. n. 32) and Williams (2002, 152) share the view that the “same things” refer to the warning about the opponents in 3:2ff, which is meant “for the safety” of the Philippians, but do not make a connection to vv. 1:15ff.

28 Reed 1996, 82.

29 Thrall 1962, 11–16.

future (“from now on”). For him, Paul “as the sender of the letter is informing the recipients of their friend’s good health, thereby allowing them to be at ease *in the future*”.³⁰ Either way, the verse can be read in close connection to 2:25–30 and does not need to be taken together with 3:1b. While a certain break is now visible between 3:1a and 3:1b, this is not as difficult and unexpected as it would be between 3:1b and 3:2. In the reading proposed here Paul at least properly introduces the warning about to follow instead of just rushing into it. Also, he provides a suitable conclusion to his discussion about Ephaphroditus. Not much more should be expected from a simple change of topic in a letter.

2.2 *The Beginning of the Letter: Ethos, Example, and a Straw Challenge*

The “good” and the “bad” brothers are taken up 1:15–18a, where they are juxtaposed in a chiasmic manner.³¹ The passage is generally considered to be part of a section comprising 1:12–26,³² and situated immediately after the thanksgiving 1:3–11. There has been considerable disagreement over the rhetorical classification of 1:12–26, and whether it should be viewed as an *exordium*, *narration*, or something else.³³ But the dispute does not necessarily reverberate past interest in rhetorical taxonomy: the meaning and function of the passage is still understood quite similarly. In this light, it seems justified to approach the text quite loosely as containing matters that usually appear close to the beginning of a rhetorical address.³⁴

30 Reed 1996, 84 (emphasis his).

31 See e.g. Reumann (2008, 189) for discussion about the chiasmus.

32 The passage is introduced by a conventional epistolary disclosure-formula “I want you to know ...”, γινώσκειν δὲ ὑμᾶς βούλομαι ... (Bloomquist 1993, 77), and framed by the catchword προκοπή (Fee 1995, 111 n. 22).

33 Watson considers 1:12–26 an *exordium* (1988, 61–65). Divisions have also been suggested, e.g. 1:12–14 *narratio*, 1:15–18a *partitio*, 1:18b–26 *confirmatio* (Bloomquist 1993, 124–125, 147–150). Bockmuehl (1997, 71) offers no solution, but rules out *narratio* on the grounds that “Paul does not offer here a historical narrative of his relationship with the Philippians or even of the events leading up to this letter”. Reumann (2008, 187–188) takes 1:12–18c as *narratio* and 1:18d–26 as *pathos*. Witherington (2011, 71–74) considers 1:12–26 to be a *narratio* and deplores that a *narratio* in a deliberative speech is often (mis)understood in terms of the function of *narratio* in a judicial setting. He claims that while in a judicial *narratio* “the so-called facts are rehearsed in order to prove them true or false by argumentation”, a deliberative *narratio* has a much wider function. It “serves the purpose of advancing the proposition that some worthwhile, honorable and virtuous course of action should be taken by the audience”. It also functions to remove “certain exigencies or obstacles to the orator persuading his audience to do something”, and even more widely, to “catch the audience up with important events since the last communication”. It also establishes “the ethos and authority of the speaker”, a project begun already in the *exordium*.

34 It does not seem important to insist like Witherington that this wide spectrum of functions be called *narratio*.

One of these expected features is the establishment of the speaker's or writer's *ethos*, that is, his or her personal credibility with the audience. Many indeed note that this is a key focus for Paul in 1:12–26.³⁵ However, as with the rhetorical classifications, this observation has not always led to a deeper and fuller understanding of the text. It needs to be stressed here that a conventional and pervasive rhetorical goal such as establishing an *ethos* is likely to govern the whole passage and to relativize the historical and informative aspects of the text.

The question of *ethos* has mainly to do with the person of the speaker. This is visible in Paul's initial τὰ κατ' ἐμέ ("my affairs", 1:12). Paul, however, chooses to point to *the gospel* instead, insisting that his imprisonment has not impeded it.³⁶ While this has often been read as a form of apostolic interchangeability of gospel and person,³⁷ the measure is also explainable as part of Paul's rhetorical, *ethos*-building strategy, as it allows Paul to establish himself as someone completely dedicated to the "cause" and unaffected by personal matters, including his own well-being.³⁸ The measure portrays Paul in ideal terms as a cool and rational actor (avoiding *ad hominem* concerns, if you like), and conveys that he is willing to sacrifice his personal identity for the common interests of the group.³⁹ On group behavioral level, this kind of rhetoric of selflessness corresponds to the notion of "costly signaling". Paul's "costly signal" is his readiness to forget himself even to the point of risking his life for the success of the gospel (1:20) – the gospel functioning here as a symbol of common group identity.⁴⁰ Signals like these serve to prove that a person is not a free-rider, but

35 According to Witherington, *ethos* is dealt with especially in the *exordium*/thanksgiving (1:3–11) part of the letter (2011, 53), but he refers to it also in connection to what he takes as the *narratio* (1:12–26) (2011, 73). Reumann (2008, 188) suggests 1:12–30 be called "epistolary self-recommendation".

36 Reumann 2008, 193: "Paul says little or nothing in what follows about 'what has happened to me'. He dwells instead on interpreting the outcome positively for the gospel." Similarly Bloomquist 1994, 148–150.

37 Fee 1995, 108: "Paul's personal life is so completely taken up with his calling that to reflect on how his imprisonment has furthered the gospel *is* to reflect on his life!".

38 Reumann (2008, 195) points out that missing here are the various complaints common in the letters of ancient prisoners.

39 That this rhetoric has proven effective is reflected in the frequent inability of interpreters to see past it. According to Barth (2002, 26) the manoeuvre exemplifies a form of "apostolic speech" according to which "to the question how it is with him an apostle must react with information as to how it is with the gospel". Reumann (2008, 193) agrees with Barth. See also the uncritical praise by Fee 1995, 111.

40 Barth (2002, 26) is perceptive despite being uncritical: "He would just not be an apostle if he could speak objectively about his own situation in abstraction to the course of *the*

a committed member of the group. This, in turn, is a necessary requirement for a sound *ethos*.

Paul is very much interested in establishing his *ethos* both when speaking of his imprisonment as well as through the problem concerning the two kinds of Christ-proclaimers. How this is visible in the treatment of the “bad brothers” will be elaborated more fully below. At this point it may be noted that on the textual level it is evident that Paul portrays his imprisonment as the main challenge for his *ethos*: the gospel has spread despite of this impediment, and both good and questionable brothers have been encouraged by it to preach more. The opponents in 1:15–18a are subordinate to the problem of the imprisonment and seem interesting only insofar as they react to it. It should, however, be asked whether this textual and rhetorical position of the opponents also corresponds to their historical one. Stanley Stowers, for one, seems to think so. According to him, Paul’s chief handicap was his imprisonment, which he “must deal with ... in the light of both his friends and enemies”.⁴¹

I believe, however, that Paul’s imprisonment here represents more of a “straw-challenge” than an actual one.⁴² It should be noted that there are no signs in the letter that the Philippians had criticized Paul for his imprisonment (although for example Davorin Peterlin has recently suggested so).⁴³ That the Philippians had sent Epaphroditus to serve Paul and to deliver him a financial gift certainly speaks against this. It sounds more like Paul’s imprisonment was a matter, which Paul and the Philippians agreed was unfortunate, but which did not put Paul’s credibility or authority in question. On the contrary, as a costly and hard-to-fake signal, Paul’s imprisonment is more likely to have functioned positively as a sign of strong group commitment. As such, it is well worth stressing here at the beginning of the letter. We will return below (ch. 7) to the fact that Paul often makes the themes of suffering and hardship work in his favor and, at points, emphasizes and even exaggerates them.

gospel to which he has sacrificed his subjectivity and therewith also all objective interest in his person. (emphasis mine).

41 Stowers 1991, 114.

42 In fact, the words τὰ κατ’ ἐμέ (“what has happened to me”), with which Paul introduces the section, do not unequivocally limit the subject to his imprisonment.

43 Peterlin (1995, 49–50) also contends that the Philippians, due to their Gentile religious background, found it difficult to accept that a god would require a worshipper to undergo suffering. Peterlin (1995, 39) insists that 1:12–26 forms (among other functions) Paul’s apologetic answer to the Philippians who have criticized him. According to Capper (1993, 208–209) Paul’s μᾶλλον in 1:12 reveals a rift between Paul and the Philippians over Paul’s imprisonment, as the Philippians saw it as a breach of contract. Fee (1995, 111 n. 18, with Reumann 2008, 193 agreeing) criticizes this correctly as “mirror reading of a most unfortunate kind”.

Another reason for why it is beneficial for Paul to stress his imprisonment instead of the challenges caused by opponents, is that the first “evil” is quite remote from the ingroup. The Roman authorities are too different to actually challenge Paul and his message in the eyes of the Philippians. The Christ-believing opponents, however, stand much closer to Paul and have the capacity to actually challenge him on his own terms. In this light, Paul does wisely to downplay the opponents and present them only as a secondary threat, especially when introducing them for the first time. This gives him the opportunity to establish his *ethos* through a much easier challenge. That Paul returns to the same opponents later in Phil 3, testifies to their historical importance. In fact, the beginning of an oration/letter is also the place where later themes are expected to be introduced briefly. Considering the emphasis with which opponents are dealt with throughout Phil 3, one would, in fact, expect a brief introductory mention of them here.⁴⁴ Consequently, it is clear that the opponents should not be understood solely in connection to Paul’s imprisonment, as the textual level suggests. Instead, they should be viewed as a threat/challenge *in themselves*.

Another widely agreed aspect is that Paul is in the text setting himself, his behavior and attitudes, as *an example* for the Philippians “on how to face adversities and possible adversaries”.⁴⁵ The above interpretation does not rule this out. In Davorin Peterlin’s reading, this is, in fact, the most important function of the passage, as Paul wants to provide an example of leniency toward fellow-believers in light of the alleged disunity in the Philippian church.⁴⁶ A measure like this obviously requires that Paul’s leadership status is mostly intact, which, indeed, seems to be the case (see ch. 2). There is, in fact, much going on in the text at the same time: Paul wants to introduce the opponents and set himself above them right at the beginning of the letter; also, by establishing his *ethos* Paul secures his trustworthiness and credibility with the Philippians, which, in turn, is a requisite for his exemplary role; furthermore, the “good” and “bad” Christ-proclaimers serve as examples to be followed and avoided respectively.

44 See e.g. Witherington’s list of major themes introduced in the *exordium*, which does not take up the opponents as a separate, relevant question (2011, 54).

45 Bockmuehl 1997, 78; Witherington 2011, 71, 80.

46 Peterlin 1995, 40–41.

3 Denigration of the Opponents: Envy, Strife, and Malevolence

3.1 *Accusation of False Motives*

Paul describes both the good and the bad preachers in terms of the motives that guide their preaching activity. This is evident from the nature of the accusations, the use of preposition *διὰ* + acc. and from the summary statement in 1:18a where the matter is made explicit. Paul insists that the opponents act “out of false motives” (*προφάσει*, 1:18a) and, “not sincerely” (1:17, *οὐχ ἀγνῶς*). He reveals that their actual motives consist of envy, strife, selfish ambition and a wish to hurt Paul. By questioning the opponents’ motives Paul shares in a common polemical *topos*. Accusations of teaching and preaching for ulterior motives, such as love for money and glory, are frequent in ancient polemical discussions.⁴⁷ In the gospels, the Pharisees and scribes are frequently accused of hypocrisy: their seemingly devout religious behavior is actually motivated by desire for glory and money (Mark 12:40 *par* use the same term *προφάσις*). In a few instances Paul himself stresses that his own work is devoid of ulterior motives and fulfills the ideals of preaching the gospel for its own sake (2 Cor 4:2; 1 Thess 2:5). As was pointed out just above, Paul makes a similar point about himself in the current text as well. This creates a fitting contrast between Paul and the opponents.

The way Paul here centers on the opponents’ motives has often been understood as proof that this is the only area where he had complaints about them. This would make it unlikely that the “dogs” of Phil 3 are in question. Gerald Hawthorne, for example, decides that the opponents’ message must in itself be “sound”.⁴⁸ Morna D. Hooker states, similarly, that the opponents must be “doing the right thing for the wrong motive”.⁴⁹ But faulty motives hardly provide an actual, historical reason for Paul’s dislike of the opponents. How would hidden motives even be detected? An accusation like this, which is both highly conventional and builds on knowing and revealing someone’s secret motives is not very useful for uncovering historical facts. The *topos* may provide a fictional way to distinguish between very similar groups, or it may just function as stock polemic directed against anyone outside one’s own group.

47 Johnson 1989, 430–432.

48 Hawthorne 1983, 37.

49 Hooker 2002, 379. Osiek (2000, 40) guesses the opponents “were probably not a huge threat”.

3.2 *Envy, Rivalry, and Selfish Ambition: The Core of Intergroup Competition*

The opponents' "real" motives are revealed as envy, strife/rivalry and selfish ambition (φθόνος, ἔρις, ἐριθεία). All three terms appear often and negatively in ancient texts,⁵⁰ and in Paul's as well.⁵¹ This means that their informational value is very low.⁵² Following Sumney's division (see ch. 2), the terms constitute explicit accusations in polemical context, which means that while their certainty of reference is high (they clearly talk about the opponents), their reliability is low (it is not clear if anything can be taken as descriptive).⁵³ On the level of the "symbolic world", however, the accusations capture some of the very basic elements of intergroup comparison. "Envy" is an appropriate shorthand for the motivating force behind intergroup (as well as interpersonal) competition, that is, a desire of a lower-status group to compete for position with some other, higher-status group.⁵⁴ It is noteworthy that by accusing the opponents of envy, Paul, in fact, implies that he himself is in a position to be

50 See Reumann (2008, 177–179) for several examples in ancient sources. Envy, in particular, was closely connected to the idea of enmity and rooted in the traditional superstition about the evil eye (Marshall 1987, 49–51). Hooker (2002, 382–83) has noted that the terms envy and strife (ἔρις, φθόνος) appear frequently in Greek authors as factors that endanger the common good and oppose concord in the community, e.g. Dio Chrysostom, *Invid.* (*Orat.* 77/78.37–39).

51 See esp. the vice list in Gal 5:20–21, where the terms designate those who will not inherit the kingdom of God. The first two are also included in the infamous vice list of Rom 1:29 as descriptions of the sinfulness of humankind. "Rivalry" is in Paul's language also one of the signs that the Corinthian Christ-believers, having formed parties, are still "fleshly" (1 Cor 3:3). The remedy for this threat of disunity is expounded by Paul in terms of love (ἀγάπη, 1 Cor 13), which, notably, also appears as a positive quality of the "good preachers" in Phil 1:16 (duly noted by Hooker 2002, 383). "Rivalry" and "selfish ambition" are further repeated as undesirable qualities in 2 Cor 12:20.

52 Lüdemann 1989, 105. Jewett (1979, 370–371) surely hangs too much descriptive weight on these words, even though they do not act as the starting point to his overall view. He also gives undue emphasis to the appearance of the same words in 2 Cor 12:20, which he takes as a strong signal that the same or similar opponents are in view in Phil 1:5ff. The conventional nature of the words and the fact that they appear elsewhere in Paul's letters reveal that the verbal similarities between these passages cannot denote a "true" parallel in the sense of revealing an analogous situation also behind the text. Bruce (2011, 43), too, reads the accusation of envy as an accurate description of the opponents' mindset.

53 Sumney 1990, 97.

54 In ancient sources, envy is closely connected to the idea of enmity, and rooted in the traditional superstition about the evil eye (Marshall 1987, 49–51). The evil eye is often believed to take effect in connection with compliments or praise (McCartney 1992, 9–39). The praise seems to signal that the one being complimented has something that the complimenter likes and admires but does not possess. This, in turn, sets the stage for interpersonal or intergroup competition.

envied – again a move that is designed to strengthen his *ethos*.⁵⁵ “Strife/rivalry” essentially denotes intergroup competition, whereas “selfish ambition”⁵⁶ highlights the partiality, or ingroup favoritism, inherent in this process. It is not surprising that terms which describe such basic processes and describe a “lower” and fairly undifferentiated level of the symbolic world, become conventional.

The forces opposite to envy, rivalry and selfish ambition are, in Paul’s terminology, love (ἀγάπη), and goodwill (εὐδοκία). The latter is frequently read quite mildly as denoting only the human attitude of “goodwill” towards Paul by the “good preachers”.⁵⁷ Although a lot of what is said in the surrounding text does center on Paul’s person, it is still noteworthy that Paul uses the word εὐδοκία in the same letter to denote *divine* will (2:13).⁵⁸ This speaks against a very lenient understanding of the opponents here, since it seems that when Paul offers divine legitimation for the “good preachers”, he implicitly denies it from the opponents.

Although the terms used by Paul are poorly informational and should be viewed with extreme caution, it is still interesting that out of all the possible conventional accusations Paul chooses ones that denote factionalism and discord. If the Jerusalem Christ-believing community is in view, these accusations are, in fact, much closer to the existing real-life situation than, say, the allegations of libertinism at the end of Phil 3.

3.3 *Malevolence Towards the Imprisoned Paul*

Amid the highly conventional accusations of envy and rivalry, Paul also suggests that the opponents have a somehow negative stance towards his imprisonment. The opponents are linked to Paul’s imprisonment in three ways: 1. they belong to those who have been encouraged by it to preach more (1:14), 2. it is implied that they are not in agreement with the “good brothers”, who “know” that Paul is imprisoned for the defense of the gospel (1:16), 3. one of the “real motives” behind their increased preaching activity is the (mistaken) belief that they will thus cause affliction to Paul in his chains (1:17). The claims

55 Osiek 2000, 40 notes that “to be envied, as Paul says he is, is a mark of honor that one has been sufficiently successful to bring about this reaction”.

56 The exact meaning of ἐριθεία is not, however, altogether unambiguous. It may also be somewhat synonymous to ἔρις (Fee 1995, 121 n. 21). LS gives for ἐριθεία: selfish or factious ambition, pl., intrigues, party squabbles.

57 Fee 1995, 120 n. 15; Witherington 2011, 81.

58 Bockmuehl (1997, 78–79) and Hooker (2002, 383) read the same meaning in these two passages. Reumann 2008, 180: “... not just a matter of sincerity or goodwill toward Paul (though both things may be true). It involves orientation to God and the gospel.” See Reumann 2008, 179 for NT and Pauline usage of the term.

concerning Paul's imprisonment do not represent conventional polemic and, consequently, promise more in terms of information. Accordingly, they have also attracted much interest, although the variety of proposed interpretations reveals that, once again, we are dealing with a very elusive text.

It has been fairly common to read from Paul's statements that the opponents criticize Paul's imprisonment, because they take it as a sign of weakness and/or claim that it jeopardizes the cause of the gospel. John Dominic Crossan and Jonathan L. Reed believe that some Christ-believers (in Ephesus) who did not want to draw opposition from Romans saw Paul's situation as proof that he was wrong.⁵⁹ The solution accords with Crossan and Reed's overall anti-imperialist interpretation of Paul. Robert Jewett's view, on the other hand, is one of the more elaborate ones. According to him, the opponents are *divine men* missionaries with a theological position similar to the Super Apostles known from 2 Cor.⁶⁰ Jewett uses as his main proof a rather complex reading of 1:13. He claims that Paul's words "... ὥστε τοὺς δεσμούς μου φανεροὺς ἐν Χριστῷ γενέσθαι ..." imply more than just the fact that people at Paul's place of imprisonment had heard that his charges were related to the Christ-message. Jewett claims, on grammatical grounds, that "the emphasis in Paul's expression, as shown by the word order, is that the 'manifestation of my chains' is really 'in Christ'".⁶¹ This, in Jewett's opinion, is written in order to counter the opponents' claim that Paul's imprisonment is a sign of weakness and cannot manifest Christ's saving activity. Jewett's reading, however, fails to convince, since the rest of the sentence requires that Paul attributes this *correct theological interpretation* of his chains to "the whole imperial guard and to everyone else". That Jewett has a tendency to engage in questionable mirror-reading is visible in that he finds references to the opponents also in 1:12. According to him, Paul there counters *the opponents'* views about his imprisonment,⁶² while a realistic reading suggests only that Paul is reassuring and informing the Philippians and/or securing his own *ethos*. Curiously enough, Jewett dismisses verses 1:16 and 1:17, where more direct claims (implicit and explicit) are made about the opponents.

Morna Hooker builds a view somewhat resembling Jewett's,⁶³ but mainly from the sounder evidence of 1:16. There Paul states that the "good brothers"

59 Crossan and Reed 2004, 274.

60 Jewett 1979, 368.

61 Jewett's (1979, 367) grammatical notion is that the qualifier "in Christ" actually covers the whole remaining *accusativus cum infinitivo* – construction.

62 Jewett 1979, 366.

63 Hooker (2002, 385 n. 24) does not agree with Jewett's *divine men* – classification.

act out of love and know he is put⁶⁴ (in prison) for the defense of the gospel. According to Hooker, this is something that the opponents “have failed to grasp”: they have misunderstood the significance of Paul’s imprisonment, think it an embarrassment and fear that it might damage the gospel’s cause. She also suggests they may hold a view on apostleship different to Paul’s and more in line with what Paul opposes in 1 Cor 4:8–21.⁶⁵ But the attempt to uncover information about the opponents from 1:16 is not without problems. Firstly, the passage does not constitute a direct claim about the opponents. At best, we have an allusion in a polemical context, which means that certainty of reference and reliability are both quite low.⁶⁶ Even if the passage is taken to actually allude to the opponents, it remains unclear what exactly is claimed. The difficulty is indicated by the various, even contradictory suggestions: it has also been proposed that Paul was criticized for his *unwillingness* to suffer and for his attempt to avoid it by appealing to his Roman citizenship.⁶⁷ Some have also understood that the opponents deny that Paul’s imprisonment has anything to do with the gospel and want to prove it is of personal nature.⁶⁸

To sum up, even if it is allowed that the opponents’ views can be read reversely from 1:16, we are left with very little. That Paul was “imprisoned for the defense of the gospel”, that is, that his imprisonment was divinely legitimated, is something anyone opposed to Paul – for whatever reason – would have been likely to disagree about.

In verse 1:17, on the other hand, we are dealing with a direct statement concerning the opponents. The reference is certain, and the unconventional nature of the accusation suggests the content is informative. Unfortunately, the actual meaning of the statement has proven difficult to clarify. Paul claims that those, who preach out of selfish ambition and impure motives (οἱ δὲ ἐξ ἐριθείας τὸν Χριστὸν καταγγέλλουσιν, οὐχ ἄγνως), suppose that they are raising affliction

64 By God, since the verb *κεῖμαι* probably functions as a technical term for divine appointment (cf. Luke 2:34, 1 Thess 3:3).

65 Hooker 2002, 384–385.

66 In Sumney’s classification the reference falls to the category of “allusion in a polemical context, which requires the mirror technique”. See Sumney 1990, 97–98 and table in 1990, 113. The certainty of reference is, however, higher here due to the chiasmic structure of the text, where the opponents are systematically juxtaposed with the “good preachers”.

67 Reumann (2008, 206–207) believes Paul’s “use of his citizenship seems the likely catalyst for their resentment”, as they thought it was “unwise or, worse, betrayal of what a mission leader should be”. That Paul did appeal to his citizenship in Caesarea (Acts 25:11–12) may well be historical and reflected in Phil 1:18d–26, as Reumann (2008, 205) suggests. That it is reflected in 1:15–18a as well is far more speculative.

68 Linton 1936, 17 (For other proponents, see Reumann 2008, 204).

to him in his imprisonment (οἰόμενοι θλίψιν ἐγείρειν τοῖς δεσμοῖς μου).⁶⁹ The accusation is not a mild one, and suggests that the opponents are motivated by personal animosity towards Paul and actively attempt to hurt him. The difference between the “good” and “bad” brothers is thus heightened by depicting the opponents as dangerous and violent: the “bad brothers” do not simply misunderstand the significance of Paul’s imprisonment and disagree with Paul’s message (as 1:16 suggests), but actively and concretely work *against* him.

The polarization is sharpened even further with the suggestion that the opponents are not successful in their effort to inflict hardship on Paul. In contrast to the “good brothers”, who “know” Paul is divinely stationed in prison, the opponents only “suppose” they can hurt him.⁷⁰ This serves to heighten the alleged status difference between Paul and the opponents: Paul claims a status so high that the opponents cannot touch him. The opponents, conversely, come across also as insignificant, impotent, and ridiculous.

But what kind of affliction does θλίψις imply? It has been unclear whether it denotes something subjective and abstract, such as hurting Paul’s feelings, or something more serious, such as the opponents’ attempt to cause Paul concrete physical affliction in prison – perhaps even influence the outcome of his trial.⁷¹ In favor of the first option, the statement in 1:17 is surrounded by two references to the opponents’ preaching activity: it has increased (1:14), but Paul denies (!) any disappointment about this (1:18). This seems to hint at a more

69 The dative τοῖς δεσμοῖς μου can be interpreted variously. The first possibility is to attribute to the dative the same instrumental meaning as in 1:14. In this reading it is possible that Paul is not the direct object of the affliction caused by the opponents. The clause could be understood roughly in the following manner: “... thinking to raise affliction (to some unidentified persons or generally) *by* making use of my imprisonment”. This reading may loom behind certain reconstructions, where the opponents are depicted as aiming to increase eschatological suffering for Christians in the hope of hastening the day of the Lord. R. P. Martin (1980, 73) and Hawthorne (1983, 37) refer to the views of T. Hawthorn (1950–51) who suggested that the opponents’ strife and rivalry were aimed chiefly at the Roman authorities in the hope of provoking persecution and inviting martyrdom upon themselves as well as Paul, this being the necessary θλίψις preceding the end-times. It is, however, more common and realistic to see Paul in this sentence as somehow the object of the intended affliction. Along these lines, the dative can also be read as dative of disadvantage (“... thinking to raise affliction in order to complicate/aggravate my imprisonment”) or something close to the dative proper (“... thinking to aggravate my imprisonment”) (see Smyth, 1457§ – but note 1459§ – and 1481§). The dative of location may also be suggested (“... thinking to bring me affliction *in* my imprisonment”). The locative aspect is reflected in many translations (GNB, CEV, NRSV).

70 The verb οἶμαι also carries a notion of intention. LS gives e.g. the following usages from ancient sources: suspect, guess, mean, intend, *think*, *suppose*, *believe*.

71 Reumann (2008, 182–183) notes that θλίψις can signify both outward and inward affliction.

emotional level of Paul's personal resentment toward the opponents.⁷² The second option is more concrete. It entails that some group of Christ-believers meddled with Paul's trial and perhaps even actively sought to contribute to Paul's verdict. Some features in the text may support this. First of all, for Paul *θλιψις* is often connected to concrete physical suffering on behalf of/in imitation of Christ (cf. 1 Thess 3:3, 2 Cor 4:8, 10–12). The word is, however, given a somewhat less dramatic meaning in Phil 4:14, where it denotes Paul's economically deprived circumstances in prison. Dio Chrysostom (*Invid., Orat.* 77/78.29, 43) uses the terms *ἔρις* and *φθόνος* as descriptions of antagonistic behavior in the context of Roman trials, when rivals attempted to harm each other. Accordingly, it has been suggested that the vocabulary reveals the opponents attempt to mobilize enmity towards the imprisoned Paul before his trial.⁷³

Although Paul's negative statements about the opponents in 1:14–18a are mostly conventional, they make a good fit for identifying here the same Christ-believing Jews as in Phil 3. If we combine the stress on the opponents' preaching activity with the possibility that it could aggravate Paul's situation in prison, and tie it together with the assumption of Jewish Christ-believers, the possibility presents itself that, in their preaching they sought to distinguish themselves from the imprisoned Paul, perhaps in the hope of preserving their own secure status as a Jewish community. This, as was argued above, was one of the reasons behind the rejection of the collection by the Jerusalem community. In this case the (admittedly conventional) statements concerning the opponents' propensity to intergroup division and competition would not only refer to the past rifts between Paul and the Jerusalem believers but describe the present situation as well.

4 Self-Enhancement through Inclusive Statements

4.1 *Brothers Encouraged in the Lord to Preach Christ?*

Historically, the main reason for not identifying the “dogs” of Phil 3 with the opponents in Phil 1 has been the more positive outlook of the latter. In his summary statement (1:18a), Paul says that he is able to rejoice in the opponents work “as long as Christ is being preached” (*πλὴν ὅτι παντὶ τρόπῳ, εἴτε προφάσει εἴτε ἀληθείᾳ, Χριστὸς καταγγέλλεται, καὶ ἐν τούτῳ χαίρω*). Also, in 1:14 he includes the opponents in the group of “brothers” who have been encouraged “in the

72 According to Hooker (2002, 384) Paul speaks here about his personal feelings when witnessing the opponents' increased and successful preaching.

73 Winter 1994, 93–94.

Lord”⁷⁴ to preach Christ more boldly ([ὥστε] ... τοὺς πλείονας τῶν ἀδελφῶν ἐν κυρίῳ πεποιθότας τοῖς δεσμοῖς μου περισσοτέρως τολμᾶν ἀφόβως τὸν λόγον λαλεῖν). These statements convey a much more “inclusive” stance toward the opponents than Phil 3.

As for Paul’s inclusion of the opponents in the group of “brothers encouraged in the Lord” in verse 1:14, it should be noted that this reading has sometimes been problematized. Marvin Vincent thinks it strange that the same people who are said to preach out of envy and rivalry are here implied to have been divinely encouraged to do this (“in the Lord”). Vincent suggests that Paul only means to identify the “good” τινές in 1:15 with the πλείονες and to set the “bad” τινές against them. He finds grammatical support for this in a supposedly adversative καὶ following the τινές (τινές μὲν καὶ διὰ φθόνον καὶ ἔριν, τινές δὲ καὶ δι’ εὐδοκίαν τὸν Χριστὸν κηρύσσουσιν).⁷⁵ But this can hardly be correct since both the “good” and the “bad” τινές are introduced by the same conjunction. Also, the reduction of πλείονες to τινές in the case of the good preachers seems odd, although not too much weight should be placed on it; the latter τινές is probably due to repetition of the first one. Another possibility has been to detect a break between the πλείονες in 1:14 and both τινές in 1:15. This could be supported by the completely adequate verbal structure of the sentence beginning with τινές, which means it need not be organically connected to the previous verse. Many have indeed seen the sentences beginning in v. 1:15 as excursus-like.⁷⁶

Clearly, there is an element between verses 1:14 and 1:15 that does not fit. In 1:14 the ultimate motivation for both preachers’ work is the Lord, but this is no longer the case for the opponents whose motivation turns out in the following verses to be envy and rivalry. In fact, 1:14 sounds as if it were originally meant only as the second proof for the favorable repercussions of Paul’s imprisonment (1:12–13). The line of thought could just as well have ended here. But even with a possible discontinuity in Paul’s train of thought, it is grammatically correct to understand the two τινές-groups as subgroups to the πλείονες in 1:14.⁷⁷ What the discontinuity means, however, is that the positive characterizations in 1:14 (“brothers”, “in the Lord”) should not be viewed as a weighty part of the

74 The qualifier ἐν κυρίῳ, “in the Lord”, should be taken together with πεποιθότας, not with ἀδελφῶν, this being a typical Pauline usage (cf. Phil 2:24 and also Gal 5:10, Rom 14:14). Fee (1995, 116) seems correct in that “the chains” is used in an instrumental way and “the Lord” is meant to represent the true ground of the brothers’ confidence.

75 Vincent 1985, 18. In this light, it strikes as somewhat strange that Vincent still sticks to a very mild reading of the opponents.

76 Lüdemann 1989, 104; Bockmuehl 1997, 76.

77 Fee 1995, 118 n. 5; Reumann 2008, 197–198.

opponents' description. Verse 1:14 concerns the opponents only secondarily, and Paul was probably not yet thinking about the opponents when dictating it.

The situation is somewhat different when it comes to the statements about the opponents' preaching activity, because it is repeated altogether three times in verses 1:15–18a. No doubt Paul admits here a shared faith in Christ with the opponents as well as the missionary efforts on their part. But it would be an exaggeration to claim this is a very "positive" statement concerning the opponents. Even in the case of the Jerusalem Christ-believing community, Paul is merely conceding the historical fact that they preached Christ. As will be evident, in Phil 3 Paul obscures this common identifier by extreme polarization between the competing groups. But here it remains visible for a reason: in order that Paul can later claim joy in the opponents' work he must not polarize away this common characteristic here.

4.2 *Joy as a Sign of Strong Ethos and Secure Status*

In 1:18 Paul concludes the section with a defiant "So what?" (τὶ γάρ;). He insists he is able to rejoice⁷⁸ as long as Christ is being preached (πλὴν ὅτι ... Χριστὸς καταγγέλλεται, καὶ ἐν τούτῳ χαίρω) no matter what the manner or underlying motive (παντὶ τρόπῳ, εἴτε προφάσει εἴτε ἀληθείᾳ). Paul's seeming tolerance for the opponents and especially his insistence on joy over their work are often taken as evidence that he cannot have in mind the same opponents as in Phil 3.⁷⁹ At the same time, the passage has induced praise for Paul's alleged broad-mindedness and dedication to the cause of the gospel.⁸⁰ Both viewpoints, however, reflect a rather shallow understanding of the rhetorical function of the passage.⁸¹

Paul's alleged joy over the opponents' work is a strong rhetorical device. By his insistence on joy Paul, once again, promotes his personal reliability and honesty by displaying interest – not in moot, personal issues – but exclusively

78 Joy is a prominent theme in Phil. Exhortations to rejoice appear in 2:18; 3:1; 4:4. The theme is also taken up at 1:25; 2:2; 2:28–29; 4:1. To Holloway (2017, 3), the repeated references to joy support the classification of Phil as a letter of consolation.

79 Thus, Vincent 1985, 19; Lüdemann, 1989, 104.

80 According to Lightfoot (1900, 89), "Here ... the choice is between an imperfect Christianity and an unconverted state; the former, however inadequate, must be a gain upon the latter, and therefore must give joy to a high-minded servant of Christ." See also e.g. Hawthorne 1983, 38 and Fee 1995, 114, 118, 125.

81 The text is sometimes also lifted out of its historical context and given a universal and theological interpretation. E.g. according to Witherington (2011, 81) Paul wants to demonstrate that "a true proclamation of the gospel does not require a perfect messenger ...".

in the cause of the gospel.⁸² Paul also creates an image of himself as being in favor of unity and harmony, while the opponents alone are to be blamed for discord. Inasmuch as Paul's last, unfortunate visit to Jerusalem looms in the background, this may also be his "explanation" for why he was not able to effect reconciliation there: Paul was, and still is, open-minded and – hearted, but the others are not. In Phil 3 Paul displays anger, but here, in the beginning of the letter, it was probably wiser (and customary) to display a measure of self-restraint and magnanimity. In fact, scholars who praise Paul here for his good qualities see him exactly like he wants to be seen. Paul's case for his strong *ethos* has certainly been effective throughout centuries, even into critical scholarship. (But maybe he should be praised for his rhetorical abilities instead?)

From a SIA point of view, Paul's insistence on joy (together with his admittance that the opponents, too, preach Christ) allows for some common ground between the in- and outgroups. In this way Paul, in fact, claims that the two groups are similar to each other with regard to a central question, that is, preaching Christ. However, possible interest in the outgroup by the Philippian addressees is thwarted by demonstrating that, in all other respects (motivation, moral etc.), the outgroup stands as clearly inferior to the ingroup.

Paul's alleged joy over the opponents also creates and upholds the impression that Paul and the ingroup are superior to the outgroup, and in no way threatened by it. Expressions of magnanimity by a superior group towards an inferior one are, in fact, common in situations where the group boundaries are seen as impermeable and secure.⁸³ The procedure does not only suggest that the opponents are inferior, powerless and insignificant to the extent of being incapable of hurting the ingroup. It is also suggested that their work takes a reverse turn and winds up benefiting the ingroup. The outgroup, thus, allegedly supports the *status quo* situation where the ingroup is superior. In the real world the power relations were probably very different. Paul portrays things the way he wants them to be seen. In reality, his joy over the opponents

82 Osiek (2000, 40) takes Paul's rhetorical bait: "Paul does not try to retaliate against what he experiences probably as the pettiness and jealousy of other Christian missionaries." Interestingly, Baur (1875, 65) is aware of the rhetorical nature of the passage, but allots it to a pseudonymous writer who wants to present Paul as "beyond all disturbing and distressing influences".

83 Unlike here, this kind of outgroup favoritism is normally displayed on less relevant dimensions "in a manner that mirrors the social creativity of low-status group members" (Haslam 2001, 39–40). This kind of favoritism for the inferior outgroup probably aims at keeping the outgroup members content in their current position and, consequently, at keeping competition at bay.

probably belongs to hyperbolic rhetoric of success used to cover a vulnerable and weak position.⁸⁴

5 The Location of the Opponents and Conclusion

That the opponents Paul takes up in 1:15–18a are local Christ-believers at Paul's place of confinement is almost universally assumed and has also figured among the major reasons for not identifying the opponents with those mentioned in Phil 3.⁸⁵ As indicated above, elaborate theories on the opponents have been created almost on this basis alone, with the letter located at Ephesus or Rome and the opponents interpreted accordingly. No substantial view has, however, been based on the third eligible option, Caesarea.⁸⁶

One of the main reasons for assuming that the opponents are locals is the alleged connection of the passage to Phil 2:21, which clearly speaks of local Christ-believers.⁸⁷ In 2:21 Paul deplores that of those around him only Timothy is worthy to be sent to Philippi, since all the others are “seeking their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ”. While the emphasis on selfishness fits 1:15–18a quite well, John Reumann is correct in pointing out that those Paul speaks of in 2:21 are clearly coworkers “on Paul's mission team”, whereas those mentioned in 1:15–18a were “not at Paul's beck and call to send to Philippi.”⁸⁸

In Paul's rhetoric the opponents mentioned in Phil 1:15–18a are very tangibly on his case, but there is plenty of room to view this as a purposeful slant for dramatic effect. Paul insistence that, besides the *praetorium*, his imprisonment for Christ has become apparent “to all the rest” (1:13), suggests a universal emphasis, which means that the opponents do not necessarily need to be taken as locals. The way Paul insists that the opponents have somehow reacted to his imprisonment seems, however, more realistic, if they are somewhere close enough to have an effect. If we take Caesarea as the writing place of Phil, it is possible to view the entire situation as a Judean phenomenon, which in turn matches well with the assumption that the opponents in Phil 1:15–18a are essentially the Jerusalem Christ-believing community and its sympathizers.

84 Reumann 2008, 203.

85 Fee (1995, 121) seems to think this is the most important factor.

86 Of modern commentators Hawthorne situates Philippians in Caesarea (1983, xli–xliv), but has very little to say about the opponents in 1:15ff. (1983, 36–39).

87 Bockmuehl (1998, 78) and Witherington (2011, 80) make the connection. Hooker (2002, 380) is less certain.

88 Reumann (2008, 203): “2:21 sheds no light on those proclaiming Christ in 1:14–18a”.

To sum up, there is a marked difference in Paul's treatment of opponents between Phil 1:15–18a and Phil 3. While in Phil 3 the opponents are considered completely incompatible with the ingroup, in Phil 1:15–18a Paul, among the conventional slander, can also admit that they preach Christ and that he himself even takes pleasure in their work. It was argued in this chapter against the majority of current scholarship that both passages still deal with the same Jewish Christ-believing opponents. The more lenient features in Phil 1:15–18a were explained as part of Paul's rhetorical strategy for building his *ethos*. It was argued that by showing goodwill toward the opponents Paul aims to establish himself as one who is dedicated solely to the cause of the gospel and above petty, personal animosities. The impression achieved is that Paul's status is so much higher and securer than the opponents' that he can *afford* to act detached.

It was also argued that in the much-debated verse 3:1 Paul, in fact, offers an explanation for the different strategy in Phil 3. Paul insists that he does not feel "uncomfortable" speaking about "the same things", and that the shift to stricter rhetoric and starker categorization in Phil 3 is designed "for the safety" of the Philippians.

Securing the Status of the Philippians against the Jewish Christ-Believing Outgroup: Vilification and Leadership Tactics (Phil 3:2–11)

1 Reversing Status Positions: The True Circumcision versus the Mutilation (3:2–3)

1.1 Introduction

In Phil 3:1 Paul indicates that he will return to the topic of opponents. The approach is now different in mood: the opponents are warned about and are portrayed in an unequivocally negative manner. Verses 3:2–3 comprise three invectives concerning the outgroup (3:2) balanced with positive characterizations of the ingroup (3:3). The opponents are first warned about (“Look out for ...!”) and characterized as “dogs, evil workers, and the Mutilation”, after which the ingroup is identified as “the Circumcision” and characterized as serving God spiritually and boasting in Jesus Christ instead of trusting in the flesh. It will be argued below that the outgroup consists of Christ-believing Jews, most likely the same ones as in Phil 1:15–18a. From an S1A point of view, the simple crux of the passage lies in Paul’s attempt to create positive distinctiveness for the Philippian ingroup. The stark denigration of the outgroup is designed to diminish its status. This, in turn, will make it less attractive for ingroup members and prevent possible social mobility to that direction. Denigration of the outgroup also works as a backdrop against which the positive characterizations of the ingroup gain momentum. The intended result is a maximal positive distinction for the ingroup in relation to the outgroup.

From the point of view of mirror-reading the text, the invectives in verse 3:2 are to be classified as *explicit statements* about the opponents in a *polemical context*. According to Jerry Sumney, polemical contexts are “the most obvious places to look for information about opponents” and he considers explicit statements in these contexts as having the highest degree of *certainly of reference*. The opponents are certainly in view. At the same time, however, Sumney admits that “we must question the reliability of this testimony”, as polemical contexts are prone to exaggeration and distortion.¹

¹ In Sumney’s classification concerning reliability of reference, explicit statements in polemical context belong to the third, that is the second lowest, level (Sumney 1990, 97).

In terms of uncovering information about the opponents, verse 3:3 reveals even less than the preceding invectives. It continues the polemical tone, but no longer explicitly refers to the opponents. On the surface, the text reveals information about “us” (the ingroup). However, these affirmative statements can also be understood to denote corresponding negative traits of the opponents. According to Sumney’s distinctions, we have here *allusions in a polemical context*. These kinds of statements rank just below explicit statements in polemical context (as 3:2) in certainty of reference to the opponents and suffer from the same lack of reliability due to polemical distortion.²

1.2 *Opponents Denigrated as Dangerous Dogs and Evil Workers*

As already observed in ch. 3, the change of tone from 3:1 to 3:2 has sometimes been read as evidence for the composite nature of the letter. To refute this, a weakened reading of the imperative βλέπετε and the entire verse has been suggested. G. D. Kilpatrick has argued that in order to be read as a warning, the verb βλέπω would have to be followed either by an ἀπό or a μή πώς construction (cf. Mark 8:15 par. and Mark 13:5 par.). He proposes that in the present form the verb should be read as “regard, look at, consider”, with Paul simply referring to the outgroup as poor examples.³

Kilpatrick’s softer reading has generally not been accepted. Firstly, there is no reason to see the change in tone as problematic. As was already suggested above, it can – and should – be understood as a conscious (and rather common) rhetorical device designed to attract the attention of the listeners. Furthermore, Moisés Silva has correctly pointed out that, while Kilpatrick’s reading may be syntactically justified, it does not fit the overall text semantically.⁴ As Demetrius Williams puts it: “To call someone a dog or the ‘mutilation’ seems more than merely an invitation to observe.”⁵ This interpretation is further supported by Paul’s explanation in the previous verse 3:1b where he, in fact, says that what follows (the warning) is designed and uttered “for your safety” (ὕμῖν δὲ ἀσφαλές). From the point of view of polemical denigration, the warning functions to highlight the difference and incompatibility between the in- and outgroups: the opponents are not only different from the ingroup but categorically and actively oppose it.

² Sumney 1990, 95–96.

³ Kilpatrick 1968 has been followed by e.g. Hawthorne 1983, 125 and Stowers 1991, 116.

⁴ Silva (1988, 172) also suggests that the μή πώς -construction may be implicit in the text.

⁵ Williams 2002, 156. Essentially the same argument has been forwarded by Bockmuehl 1998, 185 and Fee 1995, 293 n. 36.

Rhetorically, the threefold invective builds on repetition and alliteration. The warning βλέπετε appears thrice and words beginning with the letter κ are used to introduce the object of warning (βλέπετε τοὺς κύνας, βλέπετε τοὺς κακοὺς ἐργάτας, βλέπετε τὴν κατατομήν, 3:2). The first polemical term used of the outgroup is “dogs”. In and of itself the term has very little informational value considering the identity and nature of the opponents. Dogs were considered “zoological low-life” and detested by both Jews and the Greco-Roman society in general. They were filthy scavengers, who ate whatever garbage they could find, and lived in packs that behaved aggressively towards people.⁶ It is likely that the term “dog” was used derogatorily by various people in various contexts.⁷

In the present context, however, the term is combined with the more informative references to circumcision (3:2) and other the Jewish identity markers (3:4–11), and should be read together with them.⁸ A common assumption in scholarship has been that Jews were in the habit of referring to Gentiles as dogs and that here Paul reverts the term back to them. Mark Nanos has fiercely objected to the negative image this creates of the ancient Jews and has sought to prove that the designation was not categorically used by Jews of Gentiles *quo* Gentiles.⁹ Indeed, it rarely figures like this in early Jewish sources,¹⁰ although, contrary to Nanos’ rather forced arguments, it does make an appearance in the NT. An especially interesting example (also taken up by Nanos) is the passage concerning the Canaanite woman in Matt 15:21–28/Mark 7:24–30. There a Gentile Canaanite woman pleads with Jesus to heal her daughter. Jesus replies that it is not right to take the children’s food and throw it to the dogs. This is

6 Fee 1995, 295.

7 In Nanos’ (2007, 11) words, it is “simply name-calling”. Examples of slanderous usage in the Hebrew Bible include the following: Deut 23:19; Judg 7:5; 1 Sam 17:43; 2 Sam 3:8; 9:8; 16:9; 2 Kgs 8:13; Ps 22:16 [LXX 21:16]; 59:6, 14; Prov 26:11; Isa 56:10–11; also, Sir 13:18.

8 Herein lies the basic fault with Nanos (2007), who suggests that Paul in Phil 3:2 rather refers to various pagan idolaters from a purely Jewish point of view. He states: “To signify Jews or Judaism (including Christ-believing Jews and Judaism) there must be some compelling evidence elsewhere in this passage or letter to make us believe that Paul’s usage here would not most probably be aimed at some expression of ‘pagan’ philosophy or religion (i.e. representing Jewish polemic toward idolatry: ‘pagans’ and ‘paganism’). The evidence is certainly there! Interestingly, Schmithals (1972, 83–85) sees no problem in assuming that Jews referred to Gentiles as dogs, but still finds it impossible that Paul could refer to people with Jewish background with a term that denotes immorality. With this literal mirror-reading of the invective Schmithals supports his notion of libertine Gnostics behind the passage.

9 Nanos 2007, 12–19.

10 Holloway (2017, 153) agrees with Nanos here.

a clear reference to Gentiles as dogs.¹¹ In Matthew, Jesus conspicuously adds that he was only sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (15:24). This supports the suggestion above (ch. 4) that the Gentile mission *per se* was not self-evident in all early Christian circles. It may also reveal that even where it was later accepted, Gentiles were sometimes still viewed as – dogs – who needed to be saved from this unfortunate state by circumcision and observation of the Mosaic Law. Thus, while Nanos has shown that Jews did not systematically call Gentiles dogs, at least this one case can be detected in relevant NT material. Here the term signifies non-membership in the Jewish people. Consequently, it seems likely that Paul here criticizes this line of thinking and turns the tables – and the invective – on the outgroup themselves.¹²

Paul may also be drawing on the wide-spread Greco-Roman use of the term in various negative connections. In fact, it is possible that the force of the imagery for the audience lay more in Greco-Roman connotations than Jewish ones. From a Greco-Roman viewpoint, then, the term may even more specifically evoke the image of Cynics, who by their very designation were known as “dog-like” (οἱ κυνικοί). Here, too, the term was first used in a vilificatory manner by outsiders but later adopted by the Cynics themselves. The Cynics were known for their “critique of bourgeois values” and their “non-conformist and provocative behavior”,¹³ which also made them subject to ridicule. Regardless of the terminological background, Paul’s main rhetorical aim is to make the opponents look ludicrous and contemptible, and to diminish their status which, in turn, elevates the relative status of the ingroup.

In the next phrase, the χ -alliteration and the reversal from “good” to “bad” are achieved by means of an additional modifier, $\kappa\alpha\chi\acute{o}\varsigma$. That Paul is not willing to give up the word ἐργάτης even though this means breaking the brevity of expression with the additional word reveals that the term is significant and informative. Several meanings for the phrase have been suggested. Gordon D. Fee does not pay special attention to the word ἐργάτης, but sees the whole phrase as a general reflection of the Psalter’s reference to the wicked as “workers of iniquity” (ἐργαζόμενοι τὴν ἀνομίαν, Ps 5:5; 6:8; 13:4; 35:12 etc.).¹⁴ Markus Bockmuehl

11 Nanos (2007, 19–24) suggests that the context of the passage is geographically and politically colored. The Canaanite woman may in his opinion be a secret member of the Northern lost tribes (which Jesus means by the “lost ones of the house of Israel”) or she might just be a Gentile wrongfully living on Israelite land (thus making this, and not her Gentile status, the main issue). But Nanos, driven by his ideological agenda, makes the case too complex to be historically convincing in the Matthean context.

12 This is how Williams (2002, 157) sees it.

13 Räisänen 2010, 52.

14 Fee (1995, 296) suggests Paul has changed the word ἀνομία because it lacks χ -alliteration.

suggests that a reference is being made to “the works of the law” (ἔργα νόμου), a phrase which had “in Jewish conservative circles become a watchword to describe the practices in the Torah”.¹⁵ However, both these suggestions seem unlikely on account that precisely the word ἐργάτης – which Paul is so keen on keeping – also has a more specific meaning. Most scholars, in fact, agree that the word is a technical term for professional missionaries, as suggested by Matt 9:37–38; 10:10, Did 13:2.¹⁶ This is also supported by a close parallel in 2 Cor 10:13, where Paul calls the Corinthian Super Apostles ἐργάται δόλιοι.¹⁷ Paul most likely has a missionary effort in mind. The Jerusalem supported mission by Peter is the best candidate. It is noteworthy that Paul never uses the term of himself or of his colleagues (cf. συνεργός, Rom 16:21) – possibly because it was already used in circles he did not care to identify with.

Demetrius Williams has also pointed out that the term καχός raises the issue of the motive of the missionaries.¹⁸ As was already witnessed with Phil 1:15–18a, questioning and denigrating the adversaries motives is a conventional feature in polemical rhetoric (see also ch. 2). Paul resorts to a similar motif in Galatians (6:12–13) as well, where he “reveals” that the allegedly good intentions of the opponents are, in fact, selfish and detrimental to the addressees.

1.3 *Ingroup as the True Circumcision*

The word κατατομή (“mutilation”) is an ironic paronomasia of the term περιτομή (“circumcision”). It is most informative of the three invectives in 3:2 regarding the identity of the opponents. The other two terms, “the dogs” and “evil workers”, allow more general interpretations and, therefore, should be understood in the light of the term κατατομή. This is in line with Lauri Thurén’s principle of extracting information from unconventional statements in polemical passages (see ch. 2).¹⁹ Paul’s argument concerning his Jewish background (3:4–11) together with κατατομή reveal that his main concern with the opponents has to do with Jewish identity markers and with circumcision in particular.²⁰ With

15 Bockmuehl 1998, 188.

16 Koester 1962, 320; Jewett 1970a, Williams 2002, 157; Reumann 2008, 472; Holloway 2017, 153.

17 Sanders (1986, 82–84) asks whether the opponents in the beginning of Phil 3 could be seen as non-Christ-believing Jews, but dismisses this in light of the parallels with Gal and 2 Cor, where Christ-believers are clearly in view.

18 Williams 2002, 156.

19 Reumann (2008, 472), too, takes this word to be the “key term” in the passage.

20 Nanos (2007, 29) claims that Paul’s warning is directed against pagan religions: “The contrast is with the *uncircumcised*, the ‘pagan’ world of the addressees, about which Paul is expressing a specifically Jewish – i.e. *circumcision*-oriented – point of view.” The main fault with Nanos’ reading is that it does not take into account Paul’s critical words of his Jewish past in Phil 3:4–11, which form the most informative part of the polemical section.

the wordplay on *κατατομή* and *περιτομή* Paul claims that the physical circumcision represented by the opponents equals “mutilation”, while the ingroup is characterized by spiritual circumcision (“οἱ πνεύματι θεοῦ λατρεύοντες”).

The word *κατατομή*, translated variously as e.g. *incision*, *concision* (KJV) or *mutilation*,²¹ is a hapax legomenon in the New Testament. Corresponding verbal forms appear in the LXX (Hos 7:14, 1 Kgs 18:28, Isa 15:2, Lev 19:28), where they always refer to the pagan rites of self-mutilation of the skin (e.g. for fertility or in mourning). These practices were strictly forbidden to the Jews and generally abhorred by them.²² While it is unclear how much of this emic Jewish insight the Gentile Philippians shared, it is important that the term works also from a Greco-Roman point of view. While the Jewish implications to idolatrous practices are designed to induce disgust, the implications from the Roman/Hellenistic cultures play more on making the opponents look ludicrous. In the Greco-Roman world circumcision was considered mutilation of the body (on par with castration) and something ultimately barbaric. The Jews were ridiculed because of the practice,²³ and commonly referred to with the Latin adjectives *verpus* or *curtus*.²⁴ In calling physical circumcision “mutilation” Paul is probably siding with, and benefitting from, these Roman “phallic” ideals and prejudices.²⁵ Similarly to Gal 5:12, Paul may also be implying castration, which in turn could bring to mind the priests of the popular goddess Cybele, who castrated themselves in order to become eunuchs and were known as gender-wise ambiguous figures.²⁶

Paul makes a travesty of the opponents’ emphasis on physical circumcision but simultaneously adopts the concept of circumcision for his followers in spiritual form. In SIA terms circumcision surfaces as an object of *social competition*.²⁷ Paul establishes the concept as an indivisible identity descriptor and seeks to reverse the relative positions of the in- and outgroup on this salient dimension.²⁸ The negative and positive stereotyping of the out- and

21 See Reumann 2008, 462 for a fuller list of translations.

22 Koester 1971, 110.

23 Reumann 2008, 472–473 n. 12. Bockmuehl 1997, 189 suggests that the term may echo “a contemporary anti-Semitic slur about the practice”.

24 Smallwood 1981, 124 n. 17 provides examples from literature.

25 For overview of the conjunction of sexual domination and violence in Roman culture, and “the phallus as a magiclike symbol of power”, see Crossan and Reed 2004, 257–269.

26 On (gender-related) prejudices towards the *galli* of the Cybele-cult, see Crossan and Reed 2004, 253–254; Rauhala 2012.

27 Indeed, as Holloway (2017, 154) points out, it governs “the other three items in the list, which items then elaborate it”.

28 Fee (1995, 298) correctly points out the emphatic “we” and the definite article “the” (Circumcision) as markers for a true reversal.

ingroup respectively maximize the positive distinctiveness of the ingroup. The concept of circumcision as used in Phil 3:3 has two aspects. First, there is the plain meaning of the word, which refers to the practice of circumcision as a major source of disagreement between Paul and the outgroup representatives. But it is not coincidental that the term appears in definite noun form “ἡ περιτομή” (viz. e.g. participial “we are circumcised”). “The Circumcision” was at the time a common shorthand for the Jewish people as an ethnic entity (Gal 2:7–9, Rom 15:8, Eph 2:11).²⁹ Paul now assumes the term for the ingroup and reversely calls the opponents “The Mutilation”. In simple terms, Paul is saying that the ingroup represent the one and only group of “true Jews”. The procedure is well in line with Paul’s habit of wresting “Israel terms” for his followers. In Galatians he calls his followers “Israel of God” (Gal 6:16), “seed of Abraham” (Gal 3:29), “sons of Abraham” (Gal 3:7) etc.³⁰ In the same letter (Gal 4:21–31) he also makes a similar inversive move: those traditionally regarded as sons of Abraham through Sarah, are claimed to be the slave woman Hagar’s offspring (4:24), while Paul’s followers are revealed to be the legitimate sons of Abraham through Sarah (4:31).³¹

Scholars worried about Paul’s political correctness in our time have felt the need to argue that the invective *κατατομή* refers only to Paul’s Christ-believing Jewish opponents and not to non-Christian Jews as a people. According to this view the slanderous term is “not intended against Judaism itself or what Jews do in their community”.³² That the primary outgroup in this text is those Christ-believing Jews who expect observance of the Law from Gentile believers, is clear from the previous term “evil workers”, which specifically points to this strand of the early church. However, it cannot and should not be denied that *all other Jews, who do not agree with Paul* are at least secondarily included as well. The “we”, that is, the ingroup, are clearly those who share Paul’s views.³³ In accordance with the Ancient Mediterranean principle of limited good and honor, there is no room for sharing.³⁴ Paul’s emphatic use of the first person plural pronoun in 3:3 illustrates this well, as it excludes all others from

29 Klijn 1965, 280; Williams 2002, 162.

30 See Reumann 2008, 474 for more examples.

31 Elmer 2011, 128 correctly notes that “the curious reversal of accepted tradition” reveals that Paul is reacting to arguments set forth by the opponents.

32 Reumann 2008, 473; Bockmuehl 1998, 189–190: “Paul never spoke out against circumcision and law observance on the part of Jews; indeed he thought it valuable ...” Similarly, Wright 2003, 233–234.

33 Fee 1995, 298; Bockmuehl 1998, 191 (“all who share [Paul’s] faith”). See Reumann 2008, 475 for more.

34 Esler 1998, 45–49.

the positive Israel depicter: “*It is we who are the Circumcision ...*”.³⁵ From the point of view of theological legitimation, it does not matter whether it is non-Christian or Christian Jews who “put their confidence in the flesh”. From Paul’s point of view, they would all be in the wrong and excluded from the ingroup. It could be pointed out as a counter-argument that in Phil 3:5 Paul does not call his own circumcision “mutilation” as we would expect if he saw no value in Jewish identity markers. But this point fails to take into account that only two verses later Paul claims to have given up all Jewish credentials, including circumcision (ζημιόω “to lose”, but here willingly) and calls them “garbage” (σκύβαλα, 3:8). The main problem with the more lenient view is that it fails to read the text as it stands and depends on conflation of several letters. The possibility of Paul voicing different views in different letters should be allowed especially in cases where the audience is different. Thus, while in Romans Paul does indeed allow positive value to non-Christian Judaism (Rom 9:4), this is because there Paul seeks to reconcile between Christ-believers of Jewish and Gentile background.³⁶ The Philippians, however, are a fully Gentile community, where no leniency toward Judaism is called for.

Circumcision as related to the ingroup is further specified by three relative, participial clauses. “We are the Circumcision ... who serve in God’s Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh” (... οἱ πνεύματι θεοῦ λατρεύοντες καὶ καυχώμενοι ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ καὶ οὐκ ἐν σαρκὶ πεποιθότες, 3:3).³⁷ The juxtaposition of fleshly versus spiritual circumcision essentially repeats a common Hebrew Bible emphasis on the right attitude of the mind and heart over mere external practices. The ideal of a “circumcision of the heart” is well known from intra-Jewish exhortatory and polemical material (Deut 10:16; 30:6, Jer 4:4; 9:25–26, 1QS 5:5–6, 1QpHab 11:13).³⁸ Paul makes a derogatory stereotype of the outgroup by referring to external circumcision as “mutilation”, something “overly fleshly”. The implication is that those who promote external circumcision have no understanding of the primacy of the internal. Their heart is not in their procedure, as they put their trust in the flesh only (3:3–4). What is new here compared to intra-Jewish discussion is not the type of polemic,

35 Reumann 2008, 463 correctly notes the emphatic ἡμεῖς.

36 Esler 2003.

37 Nanos (2007, 29) is mistaken when he claims that “Paul does not write what commentators universally read, that is, he does not write that ‘we are the *true* circumcision’, ‘the circumcision of the heart’, ‘the *spiritual* circumcision’, or some such thing.”

38 Paul himself shares this tradition in Rom 2:29.

but the fact that spiritual circumcision is used of Gentiles and understood to completely exclude concrete circumcision.³⁹

It is perhaps surprising that Phil 3 is the only place where Paul picks up the concept of circumcision as an object of social competition with the Jewish Christ-believing outgroup. In the previously written Galatians and Romans he did not do the same, but centered the competition on the concept of righteousness as a valuable identity descriptor.⁴⁰ As for circumcision as access to this positive identity as righteous, in Galatians Paul emphatically denies it for the Gentiles: "... if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no benefit to you." (Gal 5:2). At best, circumcision is irrelevant with regard to salvation: "Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is the new creation" (Gal 6:15), and "in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything; the only thing that counts is faith working through love" (Gal 5:6). The term is not given positive value: circumcision is replaced by faith as mechanism for entry into righteousness.

Why does Paul in Philippians diverge from his argumentation in Galatians? It is noteworthy that Philippians lacks any attempt to create for the ingroup a fictive Jewish ancestry. In Galatians (and Romans) Paul argues for Abrahamic kinship for his followers (Gal 3:7), but a fictive circumcision is as close as he comes to this in Philippians. The reason may simply be that the Gentile addressees, because of their background and lack of in-depth contact with Jewish Christ-believers, did not possess enough insider knowledge of Jewish identity to require (or to be able to appreciate) complicated argumentation of this sort. Paul seems to pick a more known, overt Jewish identity descriptor,⁴¹ which the Gentile audience readily associated with Jews.⁴² The fact that Paul can so outrageously divide between inner and outer circumcision and simply discard the latter, may also suggest that the Philippians are not very well acquainted with "private mode" Jewish discussion which strongly links physical and overt signs with inner realities and offers deep spiritual meaning to the outer procedure of circumcision. Furthermore, it was suggested above (ch. 4) that the question

39 Philo is aware of some who understand circumcision and other regulations allegorically to the exclusion of concrete observance, but rejects this interpretation (*Migr. Abr.* 89–93).

40 Esler 1998, 169–177.

41 See Esler (1998, 80–81) for Fredrik Barth's division to overt signals and basic value orientations as two types of cultural features which serve to differentiate an (ethnic) group from others, and for Anthony Cohen's division between the public/typical and the private/idiosyncratic mode of boundary.

42 Jews are identified particularly by their circumcised state in e.g. the following Greco-Roman sources: Horace, *Sat.* 1.9.69–70; Petronius, *Sat.* 68.6; 102.14; Martial, *Ep.* 11.94; Suetonius, *Dom.* 12.2.; Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.5.2.

of uncircumcision perhaps only gradually became a central signifier for Paul's gospel. That Paul in his last letter gives the theme such a prominent place is in line with this. After several conflicts and a final disappointment with the Jewish Christ-believers, un/circumcision eventually surfaces as *the* question, which separates Paul's ingroup from others.

1.4 *Spiritual Ingroup versus Fleshly Outgroup*

The phrase οἱ πνεύματι θεοῦ λατρεύοντες poses a textual problem. In the current reading, NA 28 does not provide an object for the verb λατρεύω, as would be expected from its usage in the LXX.⁴³ Some early manuscripts solve the problem by replacing the genitive θεοῦ with the dative θεῷ.⁴⁴ This reading allows the “spirit” to be the merely human one: “We serve God in the spirit/spiritually”. Paul himself attests to this usage in Rom 1:9. This sense would simply repeat the general Jewish discussion about the right human attitude in worship. The most notable point of reference, possibly even a metatext, is Deut 10, where the verb, with dative object (10:12), appears together with an emphasis on circumcision of the heart (10:16).⁴⁵ While this intra-Jewish sense should not be excluded from the passage (Paul does portray the ingroup as fulfilling Jewish ideals), Paul may also consciously change the expected dative to the unexpected genitive in order to give the phrase an even deeper, mystical scope. Paul is saying that the ingroup “serves” *by* the spirit of God⁴⁶ or *in* God's spirit.⁴⁷ Thus, the question is not only of the right human attitude, but of God's intimate and concrete connection with the ingroup. This reading also allows for an even more competitive edge to the text. While the outgroup is not excluded here as explicitly as in the mutilation–circumcision antithesis, it is possible that Paul here, as well as later in 3:9, means to say that God, who is intimately with the ingroup, is not with the outgroup.⁴⁸

43 The verb with its derivatives is frequent in the LXX, where it is mainly used of cultic service of Jahwe or other gods.

44 Most notably the second correction of Sinaiticus and the original reading of D. Paul himself uses the verb only in two other instances (Rom 1:9, 25), both with a dative object. Bockmuehl (1997, 192) correctly rejects the possibility that the dative “spirit” could be taken as object, since this would be an unparalleled usage.

45 “... λατρεύειν κυρίῳ τῷ θεῷ σου ἐξ ὅλης τῆς καρδίας σου καὶ ἐξ ὅλης τῆς ψυχῆς σου ... καὶ περιτεμεῖσθε τὴν σκληροκαρδίαν ὑμῶν” (Deut 10:12, 16).

46 Instrumental dative, opted for by Fee 1995, 753.

47 NRSV allows a locative interpretation.

48 Bockmuehl (1997, 192) again harmonizes the passage with Rom 9:4, 11:29, where Paul allows continuing value to Jewish *latreia*. He suggests that “the contrast is not between Jewish and Christian service of God”, but between right attitude and a superficial focus on “works of the Law”. For Bockmuehl Paul, thus, simply repeats intra-Jewish discussion.

According to Philip Esler, Paul in Galatians uses references to spiritual phenomena as a new dimension of comparison with the outgroup, that is, as *social creativity*.⁴⁹ It is interesting that out of the polemical passages in Philippians, verse 3:3 contains the only reference to the spirit. This does not mean that social creativity as a measure is missing from Philippians, only that this is done mainly on other terms. As will become evident below, social creativity in Philippians centers on the themes of eschatology and participation in Christ.

The three participial modifiers for “the Circumcision” are thematically interlinked. The reference to the spirit in the first one is contrasted by a reference to the flesh in the third one. The ingroup is characterized by the spirit, and not the flesh; by implication, the outgroup is meant to be understood reversely. The mention of “boasting in Christ Jesus” in the second member is also contrasted by a reference to “trusting in the flesh”, the verbs for boasting (*καυχάομαι*) and trusting (*πείθω*) being virtually synonymous here.

The reference to boasting in Christ recalls the Hebrew Bible usage of “boasting in the Lord”, as seen especially in Jer 9:23–24.⁵⁰ Paul quotes the passage in its original LXX form in 1 Cor 1:31 and 2 Cor 10:17, but here replaces “Lord” with “Christ Jesus”. It is implied that the outgroup trusts in the flesh instead of boasting in Christ. The concept of flesh, for Paul, can denote several things, ranging from neutral reference to bodily existence (Phil 1:22, 24) to a negative realm of sinfulness (Rom 7:5).⁵¹ In Phil 3:3 the most immediate reference is to “mutilation” in 3:2. Thus, the act of circumcising the flesh seems to be primarily in view. To be sure, in the following verses “flesh” comes to denote all those Jewish credentials Paul claims to have possessed when he was still an outgroup member.⁵²

Paul again builds his argument on Jewish ideals, claiming that the ingroup fulfills them in a superior way. At the same time his procedure with regard to the outgroup is highly denigrating. The outgroup would, from their traditional background, have agreed that “trusting in the flesh” instead of “boasting in the Lord” (or “Christ Jesus”, for that matter, as they were Christ-believers) is reprehensible.⁵³ Historically, however, they would not have considered following

49 Esler 1998, 52–53.

50 Fee 1995, 301 n. 65.

51 See Martin (1995, 172–173) on how Paul’s dualism between “sarx and pneuma” reflects his apocalyptic worldview and differs from Greco-Roman upper-class ideology of the body.

52 Hellerman (2005, 122) notes correctly that the first mention of “flesh” (3:3) refers to circumcision but the second mention of “confidence in the flesh” (3:4) denotes status in Judaism in a more general sense.

53 E.g. Targum of Jerusalem on Gen 40:23: Joseph trusted in the flesh (the butler) instead of God (See, Reumann 2008, 466).

Jewish regulations as “trusting in the flesh”, nor considered them incompatible with confessing Christ. The polarizing move is Paul’s invention, seen elsewhere e.g. in Gal 5:2 (“if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no benefit to you”) and Gal 5:4 (“You who want to be justified by the law have cut yourselves off from Christ”). It is Paul, who presents the outgroup as an antithesis of its own standards and as excluded from Christ. The result is a black portrait against which the ingroup shines more brightly.

2 Paul’s Example: From a Perfect Jew to a Prototypical Leader of a Gentile Christ-Believing Church (3:4–11)

2.1 *Introduction*

The section 3:4–11 comprises Paul’s personal story of his past as a Jew and the change brought on by his experience of Christ. Paul’s story has often been read with an eye to uncovering biographical data relating to e.g. his pre-calling experience as a Jew. While a historical level in the story should not be ruled out, it is, however, more fruitful to approach the narrative as chiefly constructed for the purposes of Paul’s current argument.⁵⁴

From a rhetorical point of view the text presents Paul as an example, which is a common procedure in deliberative speeches. Paul’s competitive comparison with the outgroup concerning Jewish credentials in 3:4 (“If anyone else has reason ... I have more!”) has sometimes been read as an apologetic response to personal criticism by the opponents.⁵⁵ Accordingly, a point-by-point correspondence to the opponents and/or their criticism has been assumed in the text. But the overall tone does not suggest that Paul is required to defend himself in front of the Philippians. Missing in the text is the concrete acuteness of 2 Cor 11, where Paul engages in actual close combat concerning similar issues. (In fact, 2 Cor may well be the original “real life” apologetic text, which echoes here in a less acute context). Paul himself considers his story paradigmatic (3:15–17), not apologetic. This also fits the overall genre of the letter as mainly deliberative as opposed to judicial, which would make better sense of an apologetic section. Without a doubt, the Jewish credentials Paul lists in 3:4–6 at least roughly correspond to what the outgroup regarded as positive identifiers. However, presuming item by item equivalence with real life opponents or viewing the text as a point-by-point response to their current criticism would

54 Bockmuehl (1997, 195) correctly: “[the story’s] purpose is not autobiographical but polemical and paradigmatic”. See also discussion on social identity and time in ch. 2.

55 Pfitzner 1967, 142; Martin 1980, 123.

be undue over-interpretation.⁵⁶ As for Paul's authority, while the text obviously functions to support it, the overall impression is that Paul rather rests his case on his well-established *ethos* than worries about defending it.⁵⁷

From an SIA point of view the primary aim of Paul's autobiographical account is, again, to strengthen the identity of Gentile Christ-believing ingroup against a purportedly higher status Jewish-Christian outgroup. The procedure rests now on viewing Paul as a prototype for ingroup identity, "as Paul so the Philippians". The story is, in fact, one of Paul's personal *social categorization*, which is intended to function prototypically for the audience. In SIA terms, Paul establishes himself in the story as once a prototypical Jewish outgroup member (3:4–6), who made a conscious choice to reject this identity for Christ. This rejection is needed in order to portray Paul as having become a prototypical member and leader of the ingroup consisting of Gentile Christ-believers (3:7–11). With this move the ingroup status is raised to a higher level than the outgroup, and the threat of social mobility to the outgroup diminished.

2.2 *Paul as a Prototypical Member of the Outgroup (3:4–6)*

In 3:4–6 Paul engages in a competition over Jewish identity descriptors, which he has already in 3:3 (and again in 3:4) deemed "flesh". The rival in the text is signified by the indefinite pronoun *τις*, "someone/anyone". It is unclear whether the pronoun is used in its actual indefinite sense, "whoever", or as a covert reference to some actual person(s). The latter is possible as it was common procedure in polemical rhetoric to blur the enemy's identity with the use of indefinite pronouns or the like, and Paul is known to do this as well (note the similar technique in the more acute 2 Cor 11:20–23, and especially in Phil 1:15–18a). In the light of the historical reconstruction offered in this study, it is likely that Paul has in mind the concrete persons he has encountered during his disagreements with the Jerusalem-based Christ-believers. However, there is an important difference to e.g. 2 Cor 11, where the opponents are present and influential amid the addressees, and Paul is in acute need to defend himself in the eyes of the local church. The "dialogue" with the rival in Phil 3 is not "real" in the sense that the Philippians would be witnessing both sides of the debate.

The items taken up by Paul reflect, in a general way, things valued by the Jewish Christ-believing outgroup. In addition to physical circumcision (3:2–3), other central Jewish status-enhancers include lineage, denomination, zeal,

56 Fee (1995, 305) has pointed out that the appearance of Paul's persecution of the church in the list of credentials alone makes this assumption invalid.

57 As Fee (1995, 303) says, Paul's use of his own example "is predicated altogether on the secure relationship that exists between him and them [the addressees]".

and the Law (3:5–6). In effect, Paul produces here a text-book *encomion* of himself – but for ironic purposes.⁵⁸ In SIA terms, Paul portrays himself as having been a prototypical, perfect outgroup member before his calling to Christ, even to the point of surpassing anyone with similar claims.⁵⁹ The claim, with the list of credentials, works to refute any possible counter-arguments by the outgroup to the effect that Paul's negative views of the outgroup are due to his misunderstanding of it or to his own failure to meet its standards.⁶⁰ As Paul next describes his move from the outgroup to the ingroup, his status as former perfect outgroup member serves to stress that this was an enlightened and conscious choice.

It is interesting that Paul's presentation of his past as a perfect Jew in Phil 3 has sometimes been read as proof that his conversion was not motivated by dissatisfaction toward Judaism: it was possible to fulfill the Law adequately, and Paul was content with Judaism until he encountered something even better.⁶¹ While I agree with this view for other reasons,⁶² it is necessary to understand that the current text does not really allow such biographical conclusions. Paul needs to reconstruct his past as positively as possible in order to present

58 Aelius Theon, *Progymn.* (109–112; transl. Kennedy 2003, 50–52) advises to take up e.g. the following elements in an *encomion*: birth, education, reputation, social position, intelligence, ethical virtues such as piousness, fine actions (e.g. such where the person displays development beyond his age). Hellerman (2005, 121–127) sees Paul's list of credentials as parallel to Roman *cursus honorum* inscriptions from Philippi. Hellerman calls the section "Paul's pre-Christian *cursus honorum*" (2005, 123). See also Pilhofer's similar solution (1995, 126–127). Hellerman takes the passage not only as warning against Jewish Christ-believers, but also as a challenge to "the social sensibilities of those steeped in the values of the dominant culture of Roman Philippi" and an exhortation "to resist accommodation to the social verticality and pride of honors" prominent in Philippi (2005, 127–128). Interestingly, this shifts to *the Romans* the accusation of "meritoriousness" previously understood to describe *Judaism*.

59 As Esler (2004, 233) puts it, "Paul means to express his high socioreligious status in the period immediately prior to his conversion in relation to other Judeans".

60 In fact, Epiphanius relates to us a good example of this sort of disparagement of Paul. According to him, the Ebionites claimed that Paul was originally a Gentile, who converted to Judaism because of a love affair and, when the affair failed, turned bitterly against Judaism (Epiphanius, *Pan.* 30.16.6–9).

61 Sanders 1983, 44. According to Reumann (2008, 505), vv. 5–6 are "not caricature of Saul's Judaism" and not "bad versus good, but something good compared with something better". Wright (2003, 234) even speaks of a sense of "fulfilment" along with the renunciation. Holloway 2017, 160: "Paul did not imagine the law to be impossible to keep".

62 I side with the well-established criticism by the New Perspective, according to which the assumption that Paul was dissatisfied with Judaism is often colored with anachronistic, Lutheran emphases which reflect "an introspective conscience of the west" (Stendahl 1963).

himself as a former prototypical outgroup member, who has walked the walk as “a substitute” for the Philippian Gentile believers (who, in turn, do not need to go down the same road). For other purposes Paul can represent his past very differently. His portrayal of himself as the tormented Jewish “I” under the Law in Romans 7 proves the point.⁶³

The optimistic portrayal of Paul’s Jewish past may also find partial explanation in the fact that, as noted by many, in Phil 3:4–11 Paul depicts himself very much in the manner of Christ as portrayed in the Kenosis-hymn (2:6–11).⁶⁴ L. Gregory Bloomquist suggests that the hymn establishes the story of Christ’s obedient humiliation and consequent exaltation as a pattern of behavior/experience, or a type, whose manifestation is to be recognized in Paul’s stories of himself, as well as in the experiences of Timothy⁶⁵ and Epaphroditus⁶⁶ and, ultimately, in the experiences of the Philippians themselves.⁶⁷ The analogy between Paul and Christ seems to center on justifying Paul’s current difficult situation and suffering as imitation of Christ, which will lead to exaltation by God. This abasement/exaltation pattern is most clearly visible in 1:22–24 and 3:10–11, where suffering, death and resurrection are more explicitly in view. However, some have also seen Paul’s renouncement of his Jewish credentials as constructed to mirror Christ’s giving up his privileged God-like status in order to become human.⁶⁸ The analogy at this point is, however, inadequate. In the Kenosis-myth Christ gave up something of lasting value and only temporarily, while for Paul his Jewish identity is “garbage” and done away with for good. Furthermore, Christ adopted a lowly position, while Paul is at pains to prove the exact opposite is true of the non-Jewish identity!⁶⁹ A loose allusion may still partly explain why Paul depicts his Jewish past in such valuable terms.⁷⁰

63 I do not think it necessary, like Esler, to attempt to harmonize Phil 3 and Rom 7 in this regard. Esler (2004, 232–233) attempts this by establishing the relative nature of the term ἄμεπτος and, as a result, notes that Phil 3:6 “does not preclude the possibility that even at that time in his life he occasionally breached the Mosaic law”.

64 Hooker 1971, 356; Fee 1995, 314–315.

65 Bloomquist 1994, 174.

66 Bloomquist 1994, 175–178.

67 Bloomquist 1994, 164–168. The connection between the hymnic Christ and Paul’s presentation of himself in Phil 3 is stressed also by Oakes 1995, 104.

68 Fee 1995, 314–315. Notably, Bloomquist does not make this connection.

69 Reumann (2008, 505) rejects the comparison on the grounds that “2:6–11 has nothing on Jesus as a Hebrew, of Israel,... or his relation to the Law”. But this is looking for too exact a correspondence, especially if the Hymn is pre-Pauline (for discussion on this see J. A. Fitzmyer 1988, 470–483).

70 The appearance of vocabulary from the hymn suggests Paul was thinking of it when writing Phil 3. Note especially the use of ἡγήομαι: once in 2:6 and thrice, emphatically in 3:7–8.

That which was given up had to have value, if the actions of the hymnic Christ were to be evoked. From a SIA point of view Paul's typological measure may be translated to prototypes and exemplars. The Christ of the hymn represents the actual *prototype*⁷¹ while Paul sets himself up as the real-life *exemplar*. Just as Christ gave up his prerogatives, so did Paul, and just as Christ was rewarded for it, so will Paul be. Consequently, the allegedly "underprivileged" Philippians will also do wisely not to seek something Paul (and Christ) happily gave up.

Finally, it is noteworthy that the outgroup is, in the autographical calling story, represented by Paul as a non-Christ-believing Jew. By refuting his past as a non-believer, Paul simultaneously refutes the outgroup. The procedure is distortive and relies on heavy polarization, since the outgroup did historically profess belief in Christ. Polarization of this sort is, in fact, a common move for Paul, who in polemical situations only rarely admits this shared Christ-identity (Phil 1:15–18a being the notable exception). In SIA terms this is an example of extreme categorization, as the differences between the competing groups are maximally heightened and the outgroup is presented stereotypically and only through negative characteristics. In Gal 5:2–4 Paul openly suggests that the addressees lose their Christ-identity if they leave the ingroup. The same tactic comes to play in Phil 3:8, where Paul implies that giving up this Jewish identity is a requirement for "gaining Christ" (... ἵνα Χριστὸν κερδήσω). In fact, Paul goes even further: in Phil 3:6 he lists persecuting the church as one of his achievements as a Jew. The outgroup is thus identified not only as void of Christ-identity but as inherently hostile to it.

2.2 *Becoming a Prototypical Leader of the Gentile Christ-Believing Ingroup (3:7–8)*

After establishing himself as a perfect, prototypical Jew, Paul shifts to depreciating all these identity descriptors. In addition to being initially deemed as "flesh" (3:3–4), they are now also counted as "loss" and "garbage" (3:7–8)⁷² and identified as something Paul has "left behind" (3:13).⁷³ They are also

71 Jesus/Christ makes for an interesting prototype, since the figure is both historical and mythical. The Kenosis-hymn plays with both aspects but is clearly more ideal and legendary in nature.

72 Paul uses an accounting metaphor of credits (κέρδη) and debits (ζημία) (Witherington 1994, 93). The word σκύβαλα can be translated as "garbage, dung", or it can acquire the meaning "spoiled food" which, in turn, may refer to the eating habits of dogs (3:2). This could be a reference to Jewish food laws and make for a more consistent metaphor by Paul (Witherington 1994, 92). Fee (1995, 319 n. 23) suggests that the word derives from κύσι + βαλεῖν (something thrown to the dogs).

73 It is, of course, possible to read 3:13b as a reference to Paul's previous life as a Christ-follower (so Vincent 1985, 109), but considering the main thrust of the whole chapter it is more likely that he is talking about his past before the conversion.

indirectly attacked through the ironic inclusion of Paul's former persecution of the church in the list of things that contribute to "blamelessness" according to outgroup standards. As E. P. Sanders has correctly pointed out, Paul's denigration of Judaism does not include an accusation of a wrong inner "attitude of boastful self-righteousness". What Paul claims is wrong with the outgroup's boasting are its objects, which Paul, from his current viewpoint, deems as "loss".⁷⁴ Accordingly, he "disqualifies all the items listed in v. 4–6 as 'rubbish'".⁷⁵

This radically disparaging estimate of Jewish identity markers raises the question of whether Paul here somehow steps out of his Jewish identity or even "breaks with Judaism". Francis Watson, for example, suggests that Paul in Phil 3 "renounces ... his whole covenant-status as a Jew".⁷⁶ The question is not very simple, because the text testifies both to Paul's sustained reliance on a Jewish ideological framework as well as to his effort to rid himself of it.

Factors that speak in favor of Paul's continuing Jewish point of view include, first and foremost, the fact that he claims for the ingroup a status as "true Circumcision". This proves he is advancing from a Jewish symbolic framework: the ingroup is not outside Judaism, but, on the contrary, represents the only legitimate expression of it. Secondly, as far as Judaism is to be viewed as an ethnic identity, it is persistent in nature: Paul simply cannot give up his status as a circumcised member of the tribe of Benjamin.⁷⁷ Sometimes Paul's other letters are taken up as evidence of the lasting value of Judaism for him. Gordon D. Fee, for example, applies Romans as evidence that Paul in Phil 3:7–8 does not "wish to" renounce what was given to him by birth.⁷⁸ However, this kind of deflation of different texts is problematic when the aim is to uncover a particular stance (or social identification) in a given context. From a SIA point of view, the sustained role of Jewish ideology in Paul's discussion reflects his *chronic social identification* as a Jew, which has a secondary influence even in a situation where Paul's the contextual social identification moves in the opposite direction.

74 Sanders 1983, 44: "His criticism of his own former life is not that he was guilty of the attitudinal sin of self-righteousness, but that he put confidence in something other than faith in Jesus Christ". Similarly, Sanders 2015, 611–612. Räisänen, in his refutation of the pre-New Perspective views on Judaism (as represented by Seyoon Kim in particular), correctly observes that the first four items on Paul's list of his Jewish pedigree were not human achievements but had "befallen him by grace alone" (1986, 69).

75 Betz (2015, 55–59) divides Paul's list of gains in two, the first set "identifying him as a Jew, and the other set as a Pharisee". After this he suggests that Paul's "re-evaluation pertains to [his previous] Pharisaic way of life". The text, however, makes no suggestion that only the Pharisaic attributes are counted as "loss".

76 Watson 1986, 78.

77 Note also the present participial form ἔχων in Phil 3:4.

78 Fee 1995, 316.

As for this “opposite direction”, the key to understanding Paul’s denigrative statements concerning Jewish identifiers lies in his attempt, *in the given context*, to identify with his Gentile Christ-believing outgroup of Philippians, and to present himself as their prototypical leader. Context is the key. Paul’s *social identity* here is that of a non-Jewish Christ-believer, or as close to it as possible. This does not require that the same is the case everywhere else in Paul’s writings. Deriving from a person’s different group memberships, social identifications are both numerous and contextual. One identification may be salient in a certain environment, during a certain time-period, but recede in another. In practice, this means that there is no need to attempt to reconcile Paul’s words in one letter with everything he says and represents elsewhere.

As for the flexibility of social identifications, Paul provides us with delightfully illustrative examples. In 1 Cor 9:19–22 he depicts his method for winning over converts both from Jewish and Gentile ranks. He presents himself like something of a chameleon, able to change his color according to the surroundings:

To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though I myself am not under the law) so that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (though I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law) so that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, so that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, so that I might by any means save some.

In this portrayal the strong saliency of Paul’s identity in Christ results in the relativization and neutralization of other categories such as Jew and Gentile. Similar rationalization can be detected elsewhere, such as in Gal 3:28 where not only ethnic categories but also gender and social statuses are relativized in the face of the salient Christ-identity. Read from the viewpoint of 1 Cor 9, Philippians quite readily looks like a concrete example of Paul presenting himself “as one outside the law to those outside the law”. However, a caveat is in order for reading 1 Corinthians 9 as a metatext for other Pauline texts, since it, too, serves a contextual agenda. The historical context in 1 Cor is one of mediation within a mixed community of Gentile and Jewish Christ-believers. Much in the manner of Romans (as argued by Esler 2003), Paul’s aim is to reconcile the two groups through recategorization and emphasis on the overarching common identity in Christ. And, much in the manner of Philippians, Paul utilizes himself as an example: what Paul represents as a group prototype (something

like a “one-man recategorization”) is aimed at effecting the Corinthian church at large. While the fact that Paul in 1 Cor reveals his actual past (and current) actions suggests for the passage a general meta-sense, it should, because of its contextual limitations, still be viewed as only one identity manifestation among others.

All the same, in Philippians we meet a Paul, who, addressing a Gentile Christ-believing community, claims to reject his Jewish identity. In contrast to 1 Cor 9, the two ethnic categories of Gentile and Jew do not appear equally relative and neutral.⁷⁹ Paul does not claim that “circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing” (1 Cor 7:19), but that circumcision is “mutilation” and Law observance is “garbage”.⁸⁰ The ultimate saliency of the Christ-identity is visible, as in all other Paul’s texts, but the non-Jewish secondary identity is valued higher than the Jewish one, and maximal distinctiveness is established between the two. There are understandable reasons for this.

The first explanation for Paul’s need to present himself as a non-Jew has to do with his leadership position in the Philippian church. From the SIA viewpoint, a leader (as the person with the most authority in the group) can most effectively influence the existing group identity when he himself is a representative example of that identity. The phenomenon is called *prototypical leadership*. Since the Philippian Christ-believers are not Jews, Paul needs to portray himself as similarly as possible.⁸¹ Not surprisingly, this takes some effort on Paul’s

79 See Nikki (2013) for a more thorough discussion of Paul’s flexible social identity in 1 Cor 9 and Phil 3.

80 Wright (2003, 233–234) insists that Paul does not in Phil utter “a negative judgement on the world of Judaism as a whole”, but rather represents a renewed or fulfilled Judaism. I do not doubt that Paul would at times have agreed with such an idea. However, a view like Wright’s does not take seriously the extremely negative and disconnecting statements in this particular context. Furthermore, I do not think it is necessary or wise to advance from the assumption that Paul always holds the same view or resorts to similar logic with regard to Jewish identity (see Zetterholm 2009, 124–125 on the difference between Räisänen and Wright on the assumption of Paul’s consistency). In fact, Wright (like many others), while holding on to the concept of a “Jewish Paul”, manages to create a Judaism, which is actually “stripped of most of its hallmarks” (thus, Zetterholm 2009, 125–126).

81 It is difficult to assess the extent to which “Gentileness” is present in the Philippians’ identity – and, consequently, the identity Paul wants to identify with. Paul generally depicts the Gentile converts’ past as one of idolatry and ignorance of God (1 Thess 1:9, Gal 4:8). For this reason, it is more likely that the Philippians’ identity in Christ is defined, not so much by their Gentileness, but by their *non-Jewishness*. Interestingly, in Phil Paul, in fact, completely refrains from mentioning the pre-conversion past of the addressees (see further ch. 7). Recently, J. B. Tucker (2010) has argued that in 1 Cor Paul seeks to clarify “the continuing role of gentile social identity” in the Corinthian church (2010, 62) and

part, since his background is clearly not Gentile, and he does not naturally exemplify the social category of the addressees. Paul's strong words in renouncing his Jewish past can be explained as an attempt to strengthen his leadership in an "unnatural" situation through the strategy of *approval-seeking outgroup violation*. Paul's evident Jewish background cannot be nullified through mere neutralization but needs to be countered with more vigorous measures. To my mind, the Gentile viewpoint and application of typical Gentile denigration of Jews makes it correct to speak in this particular text of Pauline anti-Judaism.⁸²

In light of Paul's generally good relationship with the Philippians, securing leadership status seems to be a secondary agenda. The primary objective of Paul's placement of his own identity lies in strengthening the Gentile Christian identity of the ingroup against the Jewish Christ-believing outgroup. From the point of view of the Jewish outgroup, he portrays himself as a deviant, who complies with the norms of the ingroup. Experimental data, in fact, confirms that *friendly outgroup members* function to undermine the values of the outgroup and, consequently, work in favor of the ingroup.⁸³ Furthermore, Paul depicts himself as having consciously moved from the Jewish outgroup in order to join the ranks of the likes of the recipients. In SIA terminology, Paul tells the Philippians the story of his own *social mobility* from the Jewish outgroup to the non-Jewish Christ-believing ingroup. The positive effect on ingroup identity is based on the universal, underlying assumption that *social mobility* is always an upward shift. So, Paul is not simply asserting "I am one of you" but also "I have chosen to become like you, because it is better". The point is also explicated verbally: Paul says made the shift "διὰ τὸν ὑπερέχον τῆς γνώσεως Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ ..." (3:8). As with the polemical invectives in the beginning of Phil 3, here, too, a reversal of status positions is witnessed. The positive evaluation of Jewish identity by the outgroup is met with equal negative force. In a situation where Jewish identity is considered much more desirable than a non-Jewish one, it is understandably not enough to retort with a neutralizing statement in the manner of 1 Cor 7:19.

A specific historical context was suggested to Philippians above in chapter 4. According to it, Philippians should be viewed as Paul's last extant authentic letter, composed after a serious disappointment with the Jerusalem church which was largely behind the advocacy of Jewish identity for Gentile believers.

that Paul's missionary strategy rests on the idea that "Jews remain Jews 'in Christ' while gentiles remain gentiles" (2010, 66). Philippians does not reflect a similar strategy.

82 In light of e.g. Hare's (1979, 28–32) division of types of anti-Judaism, that is, prophetic intra-Jewish "anti-Judaism", sectarian Jewish-Christian anti-Judaism and Gentilizing anti-Judaism, Paul is closest to the last kind.

83 Abrams, Marques, Bown, and Henson 2000, 906–912.

Could Paul's extremely negative view of Jewish identity (his own as well as in general) be viewed as his final take on the matter? Do the neutral statements in Rom and 1 Cor (and to some extent even Gal) reflect a still optimistic Paul, who believes in reconciliation and the possibility of peaceful coexistence in the church? Do we, in Philippians, then meet the disillusioned apostle, who after his last and failed encounter with the Jerusalem church concludes that Jewish features are nothing but trouble? In this scenario Paul's words in Phil 3 would not only represent a contextual identification with a Gentile audience, but a more stable and enduring stance. Unfortunately, the source material is too scarce and chronologically too debated to allow sound diachronic conclusions or assessments about the stability of Paul's social identifications. It remains methodologically safest to view Paul's texts synchronically as equal manifestations of different contextual social identifications. Yet the fact that in Philippians Paul's polemic rises less from an acute situation of the audience, but also from his own experience, gives room to a more personally motivated perspective.

Participation in Christ (Phil 3:10–16) and Eschatology (3:11–15, 20–21) in the Service of Identity Construction

1 Participation in Christ: Positive Distinctiveness and More (3:10–16)

1.1 Introduction

The beginning of Phil 3 contains intergroup comparison concerning questions relevant for the outgroup, that is, Jewish identity descriptors. From 3:2 to 3:9 Paul concentrates on proving the superiority of the ingroup on the very terms stressed by the outgroup itself, such as circumcision. The last of these items taken up for *social competition* is “righteousness” in 3:9. But just as Paul “gives up” Jewish descriptors on the narrative level, he does the same on the argumentative level as well and engages next in *social creativity*. This means that he introduces new levels of comparison with the outgroup. While the context is still polemical, the emphasis is now on terms picked up and considered valuable by the ingroup. The central one of these is the idea of personal communion with Christ (esp. 3:10–11), strongly flavored with the aspect of suffering together with him.

As for mirror-reading about the opponents, it should be noted that where social competition is in process, the objects competed for will reflect matters valued by the outgroup and, consequently, reveal information about them. However, when a new dimension is picked up by the ingroup as a measure of social creativity, correspondence with the outgroup is diminished. In fact, inability to detect this difference seems to be at the heart of many overheated mirror-readings of Phil 3, although it has sometimes been correctly noted that it is naive to assume that the author always “prefers to conduct polemic against his/her opponents by meeting them largely or exclusively on their own ground”.¹ Naturally, it is often difficult to determine when Paul moves from social competition to social creativity, since we have very little objective “control information” about the particular emphases and characteristics of the outgroup. However, Phil 3 is thankful in this respect, since the “oppositional”, competitive level is explicit at the very beginning of the chapter, but visibly recedes in the middle part.

Since the days of Adolf Deissmann, William Wrede, and Albert Schweitzer there has been lively discussion in Pauline scholarship concerning the center

¹ Sumney 1990, 98.

of Paul's soteriology and whether it should be placed with righteousness by faith or with what is nowadays referred to as "participation in Christ". It will be argued below that the treatment of righteousness in Phil 3 supports the view that it is for Paul a secondary, reactive teaching (social competition). The concept is treated differently than in Gal (and Rom), and seems to fall into the background as the passage in 3:10–11 culminates in a compelling depiction of Paul's intimate union with Christ (social creativity). This theme of participation seems to be of more lasting significance, and probably represents something experientially fundamental for Paul. In Phil 3:10 the idea of unity with Christ comprises the opposite aspects of resurrection power and suffering. While the esteem enhancing potential of the first one is self-evident, the emphasis on suffering calls for an explanation. It will be argued here that suffering does, in fact, serve several positive functions. It works, for example, as a so-called *costly signal*, which effectively increases group cohesion.

1.2 *Righteousness as a Secondary Identity Descriptor*

As established by E. P. Sanders (1977) and widely accepted since, the "basic pattern" of common Judaism at the turn of the Common Era was one of "covenantal nomism". According to the pattern, entrance into the covenant (as well as final salvation) was regarded as an act of God's mercy, whereas members of the covenant were expected to obey the Law in order to maintain a covenantal relationship. The Law, however, provided means of atonement in case of transgression.²

In second temple Judaism righteousness was widely used as a central descriptor of the positive distinctiveness of Jewish identity. It was used by the Jews to describe the difference between Gentiles and Israel, that is, between what was considered a sinful and polluted outgroup and a pure and holy ingroup. Accordingly, a Gentile could become righteous only by crossing the boundary, which separated Jews from Gentiles, and by joining the House of Israel.³ This, in turn, entailed being circumcised and taking on the Mosaic Law. Righteousness language was most commonly used for the "maintenance" of covenant relationship through Law observance.⁴ However, while it was often intimately connected to the Law and its ethical norms, as an identity descriptor, it comprised much more than that.⁵ Philip Esler has shown that especially in Wisdom literature righteousness is used in a more general way, not

2 For a succinct summary, see Sanders 1977, 422–423.

3 Esler 1998, 143–144.

4 For righteousness terminology in the "maintenance" side of the pattern of "getting in" and "staying in" in Sanders' model of covenantal nomism, see Sanders 1977, 205, 624–625; 1983, 45.

5 Esler 1998, 144, 170.

just to specify ethically normative behavior, but more loosely as a symbol or token, which identifies and commends the ingroup as privileged.⁶ The fluidity of the concept, in fact, demonstrates that Judaism was essentially not a system of “works righteousness”, but one of covenantal nomism, where membership in the covenant and the people of Israel was the key question.

In Galatians the concept of righteousness appears as a central object of direct *social competition*. The Jewish Christ-believing outgroup had presented righteousness as both a desirable and limited quality, which could be gained only by entering the covenant between God and Israel, which, in turn required circumcision and taking on the Mosaic law. Paul uses considerable time and space in an attempt to wrest the concept of righteousness completely away from the outgroup for his own followers. In SIA terms, he aims to reverse the positions of the groups on this salient dimension. The way he does this is by challenging the traditional close connection between righteousness and Law-observance, including circumcision. Luckily for Paul, the term is open for different approaches. He connects righteousness loosely with life and blessing in the style of Wisdom literature,⁷ and then establishes faith in Christ as an alternative mode of access to it.⁸

... a person does not become righteous by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may become righteous by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will become righteous.⁹

GAL 2:16

In light of the basic pattern of covenantal nomism in first century Judaism, it seems obvious that Paul here attempts to create a negative stereotype of the opponents by linking their understanding of righteousness exclusively and simplistically to “works of the Law”. He essentially suggests that the opponents view works of the Law as an entrance requirement to the covenant, even though this was not the normal understanding of the Law.

Interestingly, the concept of righteousness is treated somewhat differently in Phil 3. The term in itself does not appear here as the bone of contention but is used quite unproblematically in connection with the Mosaic Law. In verse 3:6,

⁶ Esler 1998, 167–169.

⁷ Esler (1998, 172–173) sees this at work in e.g. Gal 2:19–21. In verse 21, it seems “righteousness” is interchangeable with “life”. Furthermore, the theme of divine blessing – also connected with righteousness in Jewish thought – is taken up in connection with the example of Abraham (3:6 etc.).

⁸ Esler 1998, 170–171, 176–177.

⁹ Translation my own, but following Esler (1998, 142) with regard to the δίκ- root.

in the midst of his autobiographical recollections as a Jewish outgroup member, Paul claims to have been blameless “as to righteousness under the law”. And later, in verse 3:9, he juxtaposes two kinds of righteousness; one which is his “own” and comes from the Law, and “one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith”.¹⁰ On a close look, it seems even that these two modes of righteousness are presented as different states in which one can be “found” in Christ.¹¹ Paul, no doubt, prefers the latter (εὐρεθῶ ἐν αὐτῷ μὴ ἔχων ἐμὴν δικαιοσύνην τὴν ἐκ νόμου, ἀλλὰ ...). Unlike in Gal, there is no claim to the effect that righteousness cannot be achieved through the Law.

Despite appearances, however, it is apparent that retaining the concept for the outgroup does not suggest actual leniency towards it. The two types of righteousness taken up in 3:9 are characterized in a manner that leaves no doubt as to which one is superior. The righteousness through faith is “from God”, whereas the righteousness from the Law is one’s “own”.¹² Thus, the concept is still an object of *social competition*, albeit in a modified form.¹³

The connection between righteousness and Law seems again designed to portray the opponents simplistically as representatives of the Law-side of

10 The only other instance where Paul very similarly refers to two righteousnesses is Rom 10:3–6 (ἡ τοῦ θεοῦ δικαιοσύνη/ἡ ἰδίᾳ [δικαιοσύνη], ἡ δικαιοσύνη ἡ ἐκ νόμου/ἡ ἐκ πίστεως δικαιοσύνη). I consider Phil 3 to be a later development of this passage.

11 It is somewhat unclear if Paul means that righteousness through Christ can be achieved in this life or in the eschatological future.

12 A much-debated question with regard to Paul’s dealings with the Law has been whether he criticizes it for generating, via legalism, wrongful boasting and reliance on human merits – a kind of hubris before God. For centuries this view was linked to a scornful image of the Jews, but to unravel this fallacy, Sanders (followed by the New Perspective) demonstrated beyond doubt that meritorious, self-righteous thinking was not part of the self-understanding of the Judaism of Paul’s time (Sanders 1977, 1983). From this point of view, it is perhaps surprising to find that modern commentators still discover accusations of self-righteousness in Paul’s texts. Fee (1995, 310), for example, claims that Paul’s words on “my own” righteousness in Phil 3:9 mean that “what makes the present kind of righteousness so worthless is that it generates confidence in the flesh: it is my own righteousness, my own achievement, which stands in stark contrast to the righteousness that comes from God.” (See also Bockmuehl 1997, 209). While it is sometimes likely that statements to this effect rise from old pre-New Perspective habit, it is also possible that Paul’s words actually invite this reading. To my mind, it should not be ruled out that it was perhaps Paul himself (among others) who created (at least the seeds of) this image of the self-righteous Jew as a polemical device. This is not an incredible leap for a man who, just a few lines back, calls circumcision “mutilation”. However, if this is the case, it is of central importance to stress the difference between polemical denigration and historically informative depiction.

13 Sanders (1983, 45) goes so far as to conflate the different emphases: “It seems fair to conclude that the statements to the effect that righteousness is not by law mean that *real* righteousness is not by law.”

righteousness.¹⁴ While it is possible that Paul in Gal actually failed to convince his audience in this respect, there is reason to believe that the Philippian audience may have been more receptive to the stereotype. As is evident, there is no discussion in Philippians about the role of the Law in God's plan. If the Philippians were mainly aware of the "overt signs" of Jewish identity (see above, ch. 4), they would have seen the Law primarily as those aspects of it which were visible to the outsiders, such as diet regulations, Sabbath and feast days.¹⁵ The Philippians seem untouched by in-depth encounters with the outgroup, which would have made them aware of the "inner aspects" and "private mode" of Jewish identity, and introduced them to the complex intra-Jewish discussion which ties together the overt signs with inner aspects of piety.¹⁶ Consequently, talk of righteousness of the Law in connection to only these overt markers would not have posed a serious risk. And Paul, for his part, would probably have felt no need to complicate this image. If he could rely on the audience's stereotypical view, it seems he would.

The main rationalization behind Paul's distinctive treatment of righteousness in the context of Phil, however, seems to arise from his autobiographical account, where he claims to have been "blameless" "as to righteousness under the law" (3:6). By retaining the concept of righteousness in the account and by presenting himself as "righteous" according to outgroup standards, Paul is able to emphasize his perfect outgroup membership before his calling (see ch. 6). The later instance in 3:9 may essentially just result from the first one.

A great deal of Christian tradition, especially since the Reformation, has regarded righteousness as the center of Paul's soteriology. However, since William Wrede and Albert Schweitzer, others have claimed that righteousness is no more than a reactive topic taken up by Paul only in disputes with opponents over the role of the Law for Christ-followers.¹⁷ Of the more recent propo-

14 According to Sanders (1983, 45) Paul in Phil 3:9 represents the usual Jewish emphasis on Law observance as maintaining righteousness in covenant context.

15 Thus, e.g. Fee (1995, 310) would be right in suggesting that 3:6 refers to "Torah observance understood as observable conduct" and that the latter narrative reveals that for Paul "true righteousness" goes beyond these matters.

16 As exemplified e.g. in the letter of Aristeas, see Esler 1998, 85–86.

17 According to Wrede the center of Paul's soteriology is in the notion that Christ's death redeems the believers from the very concrete sphere of evil forces and bondage to them (1907, 92–109, 112). As for righteousness, he states: "In fact the whole Pauline religion can be expounded without a word being said about this doctrine, unless it be in the part devoted to the law. It would be extraordinary if what was intended to be the chief doctrine were referred to only in a minority of the epistles. That is the case with this doctrine: it only appears where Paul is dealing with the strife against Judaism.... It is the *polemical doctrine* of Paul, is only made intelligible by the struggle of his life, his controversy with

nents of this view, Philip Esler takes up the well-known fact that the concept of righteousness is completely missing from Paul's first letter, 1 Thessalonians, where sanctification language appears as a group identifier.¹⁸ In fact, Esler notes that in 1 Thess 5:8 Paul goes so far as to *replace* the concept of righteousness used in the background Scriptural passages (Isa 59:17, Wis 5:18) with the terms faith and love.¹⁹ Accordingly, it seems that in Galatia it was the Jewish Christ-believing opponents who brought the term into play and forced Paul to react to it. In the words of Esler: "[Before Galatians Paul] already had a well-developed theology in 1 Tess, and now [in Galatians] he seeks to re-work this in relation to the acquisition of righteousness. The reactive nature of his procedure is apparent".²⁰

In Philippians we have a Gentile audience to whom Paul issues a proactive warning about possible interference by Jewish Christ-believers. The secondary nature of righteousness language in the context of a Gentile church is reflected in that it does not appear elsewhere in the letter, let alone independently of the discourse about the opponents. And, as will become evident, even in that polemical context it soon recedes to the background. More generally, the secondary nature of righteousness is supported by Paul's apparent variety in handling the topic: he can either claim the term *per se* (Gal and Rom) or, if he so decides, approach it through modification and redefinition (Phil). While the form of righteousness represented by the opponents is clearly devalued in Phil, the fact that Paul is at all able to retain the term for the opponents makes it doubtful that it had played any significant role in Paul's previous teaching in Philippi.

1.3 *Participation in Christ as the Main Building Block of Distinct Identity*

In 3:2–6 Paul's argumentation essentially consists of *social competition* over terms that the outgroup regards as central. Paul claims that the ingroup surpasses the outgroup regarding the very characteristics that make it attractive. However, in the course of the next verses 3:7–11 Paul turns to present an intimate communion with Christ as the ultimate alternative for Jewish identity. The question of "right" righteousness does appear in the midst of this depiction (3:9), but in a secondary role, only as the second co-ordinate member (καί) of the purpose clause (ὅτι) begun by a statement about "gaining Christ". The

Judaism and Jewish Christianity, and is only intended for this." (1907, 122). Schweitzer famously depicts the doctrine of righteousness from faith as a "subsidiary crater" to the "mystical doctrine of redemption through the being-in-Christ" (1998 [orig. 1931], 225).

18 Esler 1998, 157–158.

19 Esler 1998, 156–157.

20 Esler 1998, 171.

question of “righteousness” is here neither central,²¹ nor particularly fitted for the context.²² In contrast, the idea of “Christ” or “knowing Christ” as an identity descriptor appears thrice with different wording: “the surpassing value of knowing Christ” (3:8), “gaining Christ” (3:8), “knowing him” (3:10). From an SIA point of view Paul engages in social competition with the outgroup over their own term “righteousness”, but seems much more interested in bringing into play this new dimension of comparison, which does not derive from the opponents, whose Christological thinking was probably more in line with the emphasis of Q and Matt on Jesus as a righteous teacher and prophet.²³ As it turns out, the centrality of the idea of participatory union with Christ in the literary build-up of the first half of Phil 3 reflects its fundamental role in Paul’s thinking in general.²⁴

The question of the center of Paul’s soteriological thinking is by no means an easy one and luckily not the main topic of this study. However, since this study deals with Paul’s opposition to a Jewish Christ-believing outgroup and his rationalizations arising therefrom, it is relevant to stress the secondary nature of these ideas, and to point to the more fundamental structures in Paul’s beliefs. To my mind, scholarship which places the center in what was initially referred to as “Christ mysticism”,²⁵ nowadays often called “participation in

21 Sanders (1977, 505) takes the participatory thrust as central: “the soteriology of the passage ... could have been written without the term ‘righteousness’ at all.”

22 Fee’s (1995, 328–329) attempt to fit “righteousness” into the flow of the argumentation produces a cumbersome line of thought. According to him, the syntax of the section suggests that vv. 8–9 provide the ground for the ultimate purpose of knowing Christ as presented in v. 10, so that, somehow, righteousness “effected” by Christ is what makes “knowing” him possible. The awkwardness of this thought only testifies to the artificiality of Paul’s righteousness-language at this point. Reumann (2008, 522) makes a somewhat smoother suggestion and interprets “faith” (3:9) as the prerequisite of “knowledge”.

23 To be sure, Paul’s participatory emphases do not reflect an altogether unique position, especially within Greco-Roman world culture. Sanders (1977, 454–455) makes the important point that the idea of participatory union with someone/something reflects common logic in Paul’s cultural surroundings. See Martin (1995, 3–37) for ancient Greco-Roman ideologies of the body that provide a general background for the naturalness of the idea of a participatory union of an individual with the cosmos and/or others. According to Martin (1995, 15–16) the idea of the individual body as a microcosm of the cosmos as macrocosm, for example, was not understood only metaphorically, but as something *real*.

24 In a grammatical sense, there are two final clauses in the passage, the *ἵνα*-clause in 3:8 and the article + infinitive – structure in 3:10 (τοῦ γινῶναι). How these two hang together is not completely clear, nor should solid consistency be expected of Paul’s dictation.

25 See Kuula (2003, 48 n. 16) about the unfortunate, alienating effect of the term “mysticism” used at the beginning of the 20th century. The shift from an “intentional” (Augustine) and ethical interpretation to a physical understanding of Paul’s soteriology was, to a large extent, due to the emergent interest in Hellenistic mystery cults (Bloomquist 1994, 35–38).

Christ", has succeeded in uncovering the primary principle upon which Paul builds everything else. According to this view, the central conviction "that brings coherence, structure and meaning to Paul's world of theological thinking" is "the resurrected Christ personally experienced as divine power and divine presence."²⁶ Historically, proponents of this basic orientation run from Deissmann and Schweitzer through Davies and Sanders to Dunn.²⁷

A host of participatory formulations can be found in Phil 3. Instances of simple "in Christ" / "in the Lord" -language appear in 3:1 (χαίρετε ἐν κυρίῳ), 3:3 (καυχώμενοι ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ),²⁸ 3:9 (ἔυρεθώ ἐν αὐτῷ), 3:14 (ἄνω κλήσεως τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ). A participatory phrase related to the Spirit (πνεύματι) is found in 3:3 (see ch. 6 above). On two occasions, notably also at the climax of the passage in 3:10, participatory thinking is expressed in terms of "knowing Christ":

1. τὸ ὑπερέχον τῆς γνώσεως Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ τοῦ κυρίου μου (3:8) (note the intimate "my Lord")
2. τοῦ γινῶναι αὐτὸν καὶ τὴν δύναμιν τῆς ἀναστάσεως αὐτοῦ καὶ κοινωνίαν παθημάτων αὐτοῦ, συμμορφιζόμενος τῷ θανάτῳ αὐτοῦ (3:10)

26 In the words of a Finnish proponent of the same orientation, Kari Kuula (2003, 48). Kuula (2003, 49–54) lists five considerations that support the central role of participation. 1. The prevalence of the category: it appears in every Pauline letter and is indicated by distinctively Pauline expressions (*in Christ, in the Lord*, etc.). 2. The category of participation explains other Pauline ideas, such as ethics, the unity of Christians as one body of Christ, participatory language in relation to the Spirit and participatory interpretations of Christ's death, the baptism and the Eucharist. 3. It also explains why some ideas are notably missing. Paul cannot interpret the salvation of non-believing Israel in terms of covenantal nomism and two covenants, one for the Israelites and one for Gentiles, since in Paul's view, experiential participation in Christ was a prerequisite for salvation for everyone. It also explains the lack of mentions of forgiveness and exorcism in Paul. 4. Participation also meshes well with the apocalyptic framework of Paul's thinking, as it conforms well to its scheme of battling cosmic powers and spheres. 5. Participation in Christ also explains the charismatic spiritual experiences common in Pauline churches. It also helps to clarify the somewhat intricate relationship between the Spirit and Christ in Paul's thinking. According to Kuula, already the earliest church emphasized the experience of the eschatological Spirit, which was considered a fulfillment of Scriptural prophecies. Paul took over this tradition and interpreted it in participatory terms. However, as "Paul preferred to understand his own encounter with God as an experience of the presence of Christ", and common sense dictated that the resurrected Christ could only be encountered *as a spirit*, the result was a combination of these two emphases, where the Spirit and Christ often appear as interchangeable (as in e.g. Rom 8:9–10).

27 Deissmann 1925, Schweitzer 1998 (orig. 1931), Davies 1948, Sanders 1977, 447–463, esp. 456, Dunn 1998, 390–412 (who admits that the concept of participation in Christ "leads more directly into the rest of Paul's theology than justification", but wants to refrain from playing one aspect of Paul's theology against others).

28 The verb καυχᾶμαι uses various prepositions, one of which is ἐν. Paul's choice of this particular preposition may reflect participatory thinking.

The appearance of the concept of “knowing” Christ in Paul’s text has sometimes been taken as a sign that Paul is refuting or correcting some form of Gnostic or “pre-Gnostic” thinking.²⁹ But this is unfounded for several reasons.

First of all, this interpretation founds on faulty and illegitimate mirror-reading. So far, we have determined the nomistic, Jewish nature of the opponents from passages containing *explicit statements* in a *polemical context* (3:2) as well as from the *allusions in a polemical context* (3:3 and Paul’s story of his past), which fully conform with the explicit statements. The two references to knowledge amount to either *allusions* or *affirmations in polemical context*. Jerry Sumney, however, warns strictly against suggesting radically new information about the same opponents from less certain statements. He believes that information detracted from mirror-reading even allusions must always be “compatible with evidence from passages which more certainly refer to opponents”.³⁰ Mirror-readings of affirmations and allusions can only “expose fuller detail, but not establish a position of the opponents”,³¹ making it completely illegitimate to introduce a new characteristic such as Gnostic features, from these less informative statements. In Barclay’s criteria, the problem is that of *latching onto particular words*. The secondary nature of the references to knowledge also makes it difficult to see *how* exactly the passage would correct Gnostic notions. Would the stress be on knowing *Christ* (as opposed to something/someone else), or is the idea of bodily resurrection or of sharing Christ’s suffering brought in to modify an erroneous way of “knowing Christ”?

The second problem with bringing Gnosticism into play is that, following Barclay’s criteria, it does not fit the criteria of *historically plausible results*. Modern scholarship has basically rejected the notion that earliest Christian writers such as Paul encountered a full-fledged Gnostic myth (with notions of an ignorant creator god versus a true God and an idea of human salvation from earthly bondage through redeeming knowledge).³² To be sure, some have attempted to offer more nuanced solutions and spoken of “proto-Gnosticism”. Gerd Theissen, for example, sees “proto-Gnostics” behind Paul’s

29 Koester 1962, Schmithals 1972, 92.

30 Sumney 1990, 98.

31 Sumney 1990, 99.

32 Räisänen 2010, 54–55. According to Horrell and Adams (2004, 18) the existence of pre-Christian Gnosticism was seriously criticized already in the 1970s. From a more recent date, M. A. Williams argues in his influential *Rethinking Gnosticism: An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category* (1996) that the label “Gnosticism” is used too widely and ambiguously, and suggests that the situation be clarified by using the term “biblical demiurgical traditions” to denote actual Gnostic material.

several references to and relativizations of “knowledge” in 1 Corinthians.³³ In fact, 1 Corinthians provides a much more noteworthy test case for the presence of Gnosticism in Paul’s time than Philippians. However, as Dale B. Martin notes, Theissen’s solution simply “begs the question”, since it means “one could say that anyone in the first century who held certain philosophical ideas (deprecation of the body, some form of anthropological dualism) was a proto-gnostic”.³⁴ Thus, the label is too wide for reconstructing a particular social setting for 1 Corinthians.³⁵ This, of course, reflects on Philippians, which, furthermore, is far from 1 Cor in terms of content-wise actually suggesting any form of Gnosticism.

Since Paul’s use of “knowledge”-terminology does not derive from his own or the opponents (proto-)Gnostic thinking, there essentially remain two plausible explanations for it. Firstly, the idea of “knowing a god” is well-attested in Greco-Roman religious environment, especially in the magical papyri, where knowledge of a god/daimon denotes power over it and a state of union between the magician and the god.³⁶ Naturally, the influence of this kind of ideology on Paul does not require a direct dependence on magical papyri or awareness of them. The second religious historical background for Paul’s “knowledge”-terminology is in Jewish, Hebrew Bible tradition, where the idea of “knowing God” is prominent, and has to do primarily with revelation and faithfulness to

33 Theissen (1982, 132–137), who states that “even if speculative fantasies of later Gnostics cannot be imputed to the Corinthian ‘Gnostics’, as they certainly cannot, neither can the parallels between the two be ignored” (p. 132).

34 Martin 1995, 71.

35 Martin (1995, 71), in fact, believes that 1 Cor lacks the very basic features that would account for any kind of label of Gnosticism, including a strict epistemological hierarchy combined with a notion of esoteric knowledge, and the consideration of the material world as evil. On the contrary, the Corinthians who claimed to have “knowledge” seemed to feel anyone could benefit from the same knowledge (1 Cor 8:1, similarly Thiselton 1978, 518). Also, they viewed the body simply as inferior, and not as evil. According to Martin similar views were ubiquitous in the first century. In 2004 (18–19) Horrell and Adams stated that “the past decade or so has thus witnessed a sharp decline in the use of the term ‘Gnostic’ or ‘proto-Gnostic’ with reference to the Corinthians and scholars have sought other ways, or looked to other sources, to describe and explain aspects of the Corinthians’ outlook, often looking outside the realm of specifically religious parallels to the wider Greco-Roman context”.

36 See Martin (1995, 186–187) for examples and discussion on how Paul views the prophylactic function of possession of gnosis in the discussion of idol meat in Corinth. Holloway (2017, 162–163) provides a helpful comparison between Paul’s use of “knowledge of Christ” in Phil 3:7–11 & 2 Cor 3:18 and PGM 3.591–611. The comparison shows that for both knowledge is not merely a matter of intellectual understanding but something transformative, which is received as a gift from the deity.

God in covenant context.³⁷ While the language of “knowing Christ” perfectly fits Paul’s own participatory thinking, he may also intentionally echo Jewish tradition with an eye to redefining it. Thus, it is possible that, here in Phil 3, “the frame” (i.e. the knowledge – language) of Paul’s participatory ideas to some extent also represents *social competition* whereas “the content”, with its newness, clearly falls in the sphere of *social creativity*.³⁸

1.4 *Suffering as a Costly Signal*

Paul expresses the content³⁹ of “knowing Christ” in a chiastic structure, “emphasizing in turn Christ’s resurrection and sufferings and how [he] participates in both of them”.⁴⁰ The contrast between lowliness and exaltation forms an analogy to the story of Christ as portrayed in the Kenosis-hymn (2:6–11).

(3:10) τοῦ γινῶναι αὐτόν
 Α καὶ τὴν δύναμιν τῆς ἀναστάσεως αὐτοῦ
 Β καὶ κοινωνίαν παθημάτων αὐτοῦ,
 Β' συμμορφιζόμενος τῷ θανάτῳ αὐτοῦ,
 Α' (3:11) εἰ πως καταντήσω εἰς τὴν ἐξανάστασιν τὴν ἐκ νεκρῶν.

The A-clauses describe the content of knowing Christ from the point of view of resurrection. The first clause A refers to experiencing the power of Christ’s resurrection in present reality, whereas the second clause A’ describes future resurrection. The passage has generated a wealth of interpretations which assume that Paul here counters the opponents’ somehow faulty views on resurrection or their tendency to avoid or downplay the role of suffering in Christian life. The possibility of eschatological correction on Paul’s part will be taken up at length in the next chapter. Here it suffices to say that the references to resurrection clearly represent the high note of the passage culminating at 3:11. Experience of “resurrection power” in the present and taking part in the final, future resurrection are unequivocally positive identity descriptors.

37 “Paul has taken up the Old Testament theme of ‘knowing God’ and applied it to Christ” (Fee 1995, 318). Similarly, Vincent (1985, 100) and Williams (2002, 185) who describes the OT concept as “respectful and obedient acknowledgement of the power and grace and demand of God”.

38 According to Beare (1959, 114) the idea of participating in Christ’s suffering and resurrection (3:10) as “knowing Christ” do not match the Hebrew Bible idea of “knowing God”. To Beare, these clearly bring to mind the initiation processes to hellenistic mystery religions, the similarity of which to Paul’s participatory thinking was pointed out above.

39 The καὶ at the beginning of the first two lines A and B is exegetical. Cf. e.g. NIV, which has three objects.

40 Fee 1995, 331.

The expression “power of his resurrection” is unusual for Paul, who elsewhere always speaks of *God’s* power in relation to Christ’s resurrection (Rom 1:4, 8:11, 1 Cor 6:14, 2 Cor 13:4).⁴¹ Since emphasis on resurrection as the work of God was the standard Jewish view,⁴² it is probable that it was the formulation Paul picked up (and often followed) from the Christ-believers before him. But here Paul uses original language to describe the effects of Christ’s resurrection for the believers in the present. Gordon D. Fee is correct when he opens the condensed expression with the concept of the spirit: “we know about Pauline theology from what he says elsewhere to add that his experience of the Spirit is the way the power of the resurrection is available to him.”⁴³ The spirit and Christ are often interchangeable in Paul’s speech. The end result is a highly participatory passage.

The second A-clause takes up the future (καταντήσω, fut.) resurrection “from (among) the dead” (ἐκ νεκρῶν). There is a span in Paul’s thinking, which links the resurrection of Christ and the present experience of this resurrection power to future resurrection, as expressed e.g. in 1 Cor 15. The appearance of this dynamic is clearly the climax of the whole passage 3:2–11, which begun as a repudiation of the Jewish Christ-believing outgroup on their terms, but now ends with a new dimension of comparison. The combination of future and transcendent themes with a personal, intimate experience is a powerful one.⁴⁴

While it is easy to agree that Paul’s emphasis on resurrection in the A-lines boosts ingroup identity in a positive way, the stress on participation in Christ’s suffering and death in the B-lines calls for more explanation. Can this more somber note serve to strengthen ingroup identity, and if so, how?

Historically, Paul was not the first Christ-believer who needed to deal with the themes of suffering and death. Although it seems to have been the experiences of the *risen* Lord which set the first community in motion, the fact of Christ’s suffering and shameful crucifixion had to be interpreted in a positive way as well. From a SIA point of view, these explanations represent a form of

41 Fee 1995, 332; Bockmuehl 1997, 214. Reumann (2008, 523) claims “a clash over resurrection is apparent” in this text. He even reads the pronoun “his” (resurrection) as designed to correct an erroneous view of the believers’ resurrection as already reality (“perhaps through baptism”).

42 See Bockmuehl 1997, 214.

43 Fee 1995, 332.

44 An appeal to transcendent reality is a powerful tool for legitimating Paul’s views, since otherworldly realities are virtually impossible to disprove. This legitimating capacity is made even stronger by linking the transcendental with a very personal, tangible experience of Christ. In a sense, the procedure creates an arch that covers “the symbolic world” from its very otherworldly heights (future and transcendental) to levels near the “real world” (present and tangible).

social creativity where the ingroup redefines positively something commonly viewed as negative (the “black is beautiful”-argument in the form “suffering/death is positive”). Furthermore, as Christ was the prototype for the ingroup, also his negative experiences – interpreted positively – became something to be imitated by the believers.

In Paul’s texts, the treatment of suffering and lowliness seems to find a kind of climax in 2 Cor, in the context of rivalry with those Paul ironically calls “Super Apostles” (11:5).⁴⁵ These Jewish Christian missionaries had gained considerable ground in the church of Corinth and criticized Paul heavily. According to them, Paul lacked rhetorical skills and his “bodily presence” was weak (2 Cor 10:10). Furthermore, they claimed Paul’s spiritual gifts were meager and even raised doubt as to whether Christ really spoke through him (2 Cor 13:3). Paul, however, responds with an unexpected move. He embraces these accusations and actually claims to boast in this weakness (“weakness is strength”). In a similar vein, a list of Paul’s ordeals and sufferings (2 Cor 11:22–33) function as proof for the genuineness of his apostleship. This legitimation of weakness and suffering founds on the rationalization that they reflect genuine imitation of Christ, who “was crucified in weakness” (13:4).⁴⁶ With participatory overtones, Paul insists that the believers are weak “in him” (Christ) (13:4) as well. Here, I believe, Paul made a notable break-through in terms of explaining suffering in participatory terms and finding for it a functional role in his message.

As a later writing, Philippians seems in many ways to continue and build on the treatment of weakness/suffering as formulated in 2 Corinthians. The B-lines in Phil 3:10 resonate the participatory language of 2 Cor 4:10–12, where it is said that the apostles are “carrying in the body the death of Jesus” and that “death is at work” in them.⁴⁷ But, given that the immediate historical context of Philippians differs considerably from 2 Cor, what is the function of the theme of participatory suffering here in Philippians?

It has, again, been common to read the passage directly as Paul’s correction to the opponents’ erroneous views on suffering. According to some, the

45 This is not to say that the theme is missing from earlier letters. Already in 1 Thess 3:3 hardship is legitimated eschatologically as something the believers are “destined for”.

46 See Larson (2004) on the role of gender norms in the opponents’ accusations as well as in Paul’s response in 2 Cor. Larson finds in Paul’s reaction appeals to traditional masculinity, counter-accusations of the opponents as hypermasculine and the Corinthians as weak (2004, 94–96) – but also a “dangerous strategy” of strong identification with a weak Christ (2004, 96). Indeed, she claims Paul’s retort constitutes “a rejection of certain traditional standards of masculinity”, but not a completely consistent one (2004, 94).

47 See also 2 Cor 1:7 for similar, participatory language of shared suffering.

opponents reject the possibility of suffering by stressing, in “divine man” fashion, the spiritual state and powers of the believer, often as a result of some form of “realized eschatology”.⁴⁸ Attesting to the variety of possible mirror-readings, it has also been proposed that the opponents’ fault is their overly mundane viewpoint as they “love pleasure” in this life and for want of any concept of afterlife, are not willing to spend this one suffering.⁴⁹ The difficulty in fitting a new theme of suffering to what is more securely learnt of the opponents at the beginning of Phil 3 has resulted in either attributing to the same Jewish Christ-believing opponents radically new characteristics or in positing a new, different group behind the passage. The same methodological problems arise as above with suggestions of Gnosticism.

While the theme of suffering here does not seem to reflect direct polemic against the opponents, it does serve other purposes. One immediate function, as often noted, has to do with the audience’s present situation of suffering.⁵⁰ As evidenced in 1:29, the Philippians currently experienced some form of harassment by the local Roman authorities (although Paul is probably exaggerating it, see ch. 3). Paul legitimizes the situation in 1:29 by insisting that suffering is “granted” by God and is a legitimate Christian experience (“for Christ”). In addition, the Philippians share “the same” experience with their prototypical leader, Paul (1:30), and mirror the experience of the self-humiliating Christ as well (2:6–11). Similarly, in 3:10, by incorporating suffering as an integral aspect of participation in Christ, Paul emphasizes the legitimacy of the Philippians’ difficult situation. It is possible that the Jewish Christ-believing outgroup is also reflected here indirectly, inasmuch as Paul anticipated that their offer of circumcision and membership in a synagogue could present for the Philippians a way out of their troublesome situation (see ch. 3).⁵¹

Alongside his concern for the Philippians, Paul seems also interested in legitimizing his own difficult situation. As a prisoner (possibly heading for martyrdom) and as one rejected by the Jerusalem authorities he needs to fend off

48 Jewett (1979, 367–371) reads 3:10 as Paul’s rejection of the “divine man” missionaries at the location of his imprisonment (more directly in 1:15–18a). According to Jewett, these spiritualists had accused Paul of endangering the gospel by his imprisonment, which exhibited shameful humility instead of spiritual transcendent power suitable for an apostle of Christ. (For Jewett’s full view, see ch. 5).

49 Bloomquist 1994, 180–181.

50 Emphasized e.g. by Fee 1995, 333.

51 Fee 1995, 334.

any notions of shame or defeat that could ensue.⁵² However, the emphasis on suffering has positive functions beyond just excusing current difficulties. In fact, Paul may pick it up, not only out of necessity and embarrassingly, but as a potent medium of identity construction. If this is the case, we should also allow for an element of exaggeration in the depiction of his own as well as the addressees' situation. The emphasis on suffering works, first of all, to effectively define the boundaries of the ingroup. Inasmuch as hardship is caused by outsiders it serves to heighten the contrast between the in- and outgroup(s). The outgroup(s) are, furthermore, portrayed as hostile, ignorant and dangerous, whereas the ingroup consists of innocent victims. Thus, real or imagined suffering and persecution effect strong *positive distinctiveness* for the ingroup.⁵³

The portrayal of suffering as a normal, and even expected, experience of the believer also works to enhance group cohesion and intra-group cooperation. Various stigmas and sacrifices attached to membership act as costly and hard-to-fake demands, which help to screen out possible free-riders (see ch. 2). In Philippians both the hymnic Christ and Paul pay a high price to reap the benefits of the group: they must be willing to suffer and die in order to be raised.⁵⁴ That the same is expected of the addressees is stated both explicitly (1:29, 2:5) as well as implicitly through the Christ→Paul→Philippians -typology. It may be added here that perhaps suffering becomes such a central "costly demand" for Paul (and later Christianity), because he no longer promotes the ritual statutes and legal codes that made up for costliness in Jewish group identity.⁵⁵

An even wider effect has to do with how suffering and persecution increases the credibility and attractiveness of the ingroup for both insiders and outsiders. According to Rodney Stark, it is because the rewards of religion and the risk of investing in it cannot be verified in this world that a primary means of

52 Kuula (2003, 54) correctly makes the point that "thinking in terms of participation helped Paul to make sense of his sufferings and hardships" as they "bear witness to his union with Christ".

53 Moss (2013, 246) makes the same point without SIA terminology, when she describes the "invention of the persecuted church", where themes of suffering and martyrdom were used as "polarizing rhetorical tools" which serve "to exclude and suppress other groups, to identify them with demonic forces, and to legitimize rhetorical and perhaps also literal violence against them". In fact, Moss (2013, 256) sees the rhetoric of martyrdom as a threat to serious dialogue even today.

54 The demand is certainly high. According to Sosis (2004, 169) "groups that impose the greatest demands on their members will elicit the highest levels of devotion and commitment."

55 Literate cultures tend to produce formalized costly demands that take "time, energy and material costs" rather than demands that are costly in the sense of being painful and/or dangerous (Sosis 2003, 93–94).

assessment relies on the testimony of others of the “tangible benefits” of the religion.⁵⁶ The testimony, in turn, becomes more credible when the testifier has very little to obtain from it. According to Stark, herein lies the value of early Christian martyrs, who “are the most credible exponents of the value of a religion.”⁵⁷ In this light, Paul’s emphasis on suffering finds yet another explanation. The way he portrays himself as willingly accepting imprisonment and even death attests to the value of his belief system to the addressees, who are to exhibit similar behavior in order to assure others.⁵⁸ That suffering and resurrection are tied together so closely in 3:10 also makes good sense: the B-lines (suffering and death) testify to how much faith Paul has in the reality of the A-lines (resurrection). That suffering is given a central (in fact, a *sine qua non*)⁵⁹ place in the “crown experience” of participation in Christ demonstrates the centrality of this principle for Paul.⁶⁰ If we believe Stark, sacrifice and stigma, in fact, became “the dynamo behind the rise of Christianity.”⁶¹

56 Stark 1997, 173. Stark advances from a viewpoint of rational choice theory. For criticism of the theory, see 2.

57 Stark 1997, 174.

58 In Phil 1:28 Paul explicitly speaks of fearlessness in the face of opposition (and possible suffering) as “evidence” or “demonstration” (ἐνδειξις), although for those who are to be destroyed.

59 That Paul not only legitimizes suffering as a possible experience of the believer, but insists that it is *necessary*, is reflected grammatically in that resurrection power and suffering in 3:10 are inseparably connected by a common article: τὴν δύναμιν τῆς ἀναστάσεως αὐτοῦ καὶ κοινωνίαν παθημάτων αὐτοῦ.

60 Shantz (2008, 197–205) observes that Paul repeatedly pairs his descriptions of ecstasy with suffering. She notes that one typical way in which a shamanistic career begins is with suffering (an initiation crisis), which, in turn, triggers a trance experience (an altered state of consciousness, ASC). If this is what Paul experienced, it would also make his body more permeable so that it is open to “the presence of another within him” (2008, 203). This means that the trance would integrally also include the experience of union with Christ. If the roots of Paul’s experience of participatory union with Christ actually arise from ecstatic experience, organically coupled with an experience of suffering, the connection between suffering and participation is even less rationally and strategically motivated than was suggested above.

61 Stark 1997, 167. See Castelli (2004) for an analysis on how the ideas of persecution and martyrdom were worked by/into the collective memory and cultural heritage of Christianity in a way that “produced versions of Christian identity that would be formative even into the current moment” (2004, 200). Rosell Nebreda (2014, 347–365) describes how Paul’s emphasis in Phil on suffering and humility as imitation of Christ is picked up in Polycarpian material (Pol. *Phil.* and *Mart. Pol.*) and applied in identity construction. To my mind, however, the way he emphasizes the revolutionary and counter-cultural nature of the Christian view on suffering reveals that he is still captive of the Christian rhetoric rather than viewing the phenomenon from the outside.

2 The Function of Eschatology in Phil 3: Contesting the Future and Motivating the Ingroup

2.1 *Introduction*

Paul's objective throughout the letter to the Philippians is to ensure the survival of the ingroup as a distinct entity. In order to achieve this, he stresses the positive and distinct nature of the group. The previous chapter of this study examined the way Paul applied the idea of participation in Christ in this sense. Here it will be discussed how Paul's eschatological statements in Phil 3 work to the same effect. The meaning of Paul's much discussed eschatological reservation in 3:11–15 will be addressed, as well as the function of his more straight forward eschatological statements in 3:20–21.

On a general level, Paul's eschatological outlook in Philippians coheres well with his eschatology elsewhere. Certain distinct features in Phil 3, however, have led scholars to suspect that Paul is there, in fact, correcting some form of eschatological error either by the Jewish Christ-believing opponents mentioned already in 3:2 or by the recipients of the letter. The features include 1. the unique formulation concerning Paul's wish to be "resurrected from (among) the dead" in 3:11, coupled with an element of hesitation ("if somehow"), 2. the three denials in 3:12–13 of having already "taken hold of" or "completed" / "become perfect" and 3. the denial of being "perfected" in 3:12, coupled with the reference to the Philippians (and Paul himself) as "perfect" or "mature" in 3:15.

These features have often been understood as Paul's refutation of a faulty "realized eschatology". Confusion around the text, however, is manifold: there is not only disagreement about whether the text actually reflects faulty views, but also, if this is the case, what kind and by whom exactly. Some decide that the same Jewish Christ-believing opponents as in 3:2ff are in view, and modify their image in order to fit realized eschatology in the picture.⁶² Others see a similar error, but by the Philippians and not some outside opponents.⁶³ But even though some forms of realized eschatology are clearly visible in later Christian tradition, it remains unclear to what extent such emphases were present already in Paul's time. In fact, some see no "realized eschatology" behind the passage, but take it as continuing the refutation of the Jewish Christ-believing opponents, and with a different meaning (e.g. the Mosaic Law as "perfection").⁶⁴

62 Koester 1961–62, who labels them "Jewish Gnostics", and more recently Reumann 2008.

63 Jewett 1979; Peterlin 1995.

64 Hawthorne 1983, Bockmuehl 1997, Fee 1995.

It will be argued in this chapter that the common assumption of eschatological correction in the text does not hold up, and that the function of Paul's statements on eschatological reservation needs to be looked for elsewhere. In fact, the puzzling denials of having reached eschatological fulfillment are best explained as attempts to motivate the ingroup, which needs to be reminded that it truly lacks something until the day of the final salvation. This motivational element, in turn, increases group cohesiveness and contributes to the survival of its distinct identity.

As for the more straight forward eschatological statements in 3:20–21, it will be argued that Paul applies them in order to provide positive distinctiveness for the Philippian ingroup on temporal terms. Unlike in Gal and Rom, where Jewish history and *past* is much the question, here in Philippians Paul contests the outgroup in terms of the one, indivisible eschatological *future*, and claims final victory for the ingroup.

2.2 *Paul's Eschatology*

It is generally admitted that Paul's eschatological statements do not form a logical, consistent whole. Paul clearly harbors ideas from two different strands of eschatological thinking, which are also stressed variously at different stages of his life. On the one hand, Paul waits for an (imminent) return of Christ as a future, collective happening. On the other hand, he expects to leave his earthly body behind and be personally united with Christ immediately upon death.⁶⁵ Mixing Jewish and Greco-Roman traditions was not unique to Paul, but actually quite common in Hellenistic Jewish thinking.⁶⁶ Although Jews traditionally hoped for "a collective national restoration", some Diaspora writers "express a view of immortality that is largely disconnected from the historical

65 To be sure, these two thoughts could be harmonized by assuming an intermediate state of some kind. This is done in e.g. 1 En 22, a popular apocalyptic book in Paul's time. According to Josephus the idea of an intermediate state was entertained by Pharisees, which means it may have been available to Paul from his Pharisaic background tradition (*B.J.* 2, 8, 14, see also Wright 2003, 194–195). However, I consider it unduly harmonizing to read it into Paul's text (like e.g. Wright 2003, 226–227 does), since he himself never discusses it clearly nor implies it. In fact, in 1 Thess 4:13–16 Paul speaks of those who have passed as being "asleep" and "dead". For Pharisaic belief in an intermediate, "angelic" state, see Wright 2003, 133–134.

66 Lehtipuu (2004, 40) emphasizes the deeply hellenized nature of Judaism and Jewish eschatological thinking at this point in history, but also admits that the degree of hellenization varies between different sources.

orientation of the mainstream hopes and more attuned to the Greco-Roman world of thought.”⁶⁷

While the influence of Hellenistic culture on Jerusalem and Palestine should not be underestimated, it seems clear that Jesus himself mainly built his proclamation on the imminent arrival of the kingdom of God on traditional Jewish imagery.⁶⁸ In fact, this line of thinking forms an ideological trajectory all the way from John the Baptist, through Jesus, to the earliest Christ-believing communities in Jerusalem, and later appears with different emphases in Paul and the Synoptics as well.⁶⁹ For the purposes of the present discussion it is important to note here that, in all likelihood, the Jerusalem community stood closer to Jesus’ traditional Jewish eschatology than Paul’s mixed type.

In Paul’s texts the futuristic, collectivist thinking surfaces especially in 1 Thess 4:15–17 and 1 Cor 15:20–28, 51–53. In both passages Paul voices an expectation that Christ will return shortly, wake the deceased believers, and transform those who are still alive. Paul himself expects to be among the latter. However, unlike many Christ-believers before and after him – including the early Jerusalem community⁷⁰ – Paul does not seem to expect an *earthly* kingdom. God’s kingdom is for him essentially a heavenly one.⁷¹ According to Heikki Räisänen, the exceptional depiction of earthly transformation in Rom 8 is “a piece of traditional eschatology that no longer belongs to the core of [Paul’s] own convictions”.⁷²

As an alternative to future parousia Paul envisions an individualized and transcendent way to Christ through personal death. In 2 Cor 5:1–10 Paul describes the death of an individual as stripping off “the earthly tent” and dressing

67 Räisänen 2010, 83–85. Writings which suggest immortality of the soul rather than future, bodily resurrection include e.g. 4 Macc and Philo.

68 For a brief discussion on the scholarly debate between an eschatological and non-eschatological (sapiential) Jesus, see Räisänen 2010, 86–93 (2010, 86–89 for the main points in favor of an overall eschatological interpretation of Jesus and 2010, 89–93 for the earthly nature of Jesus’ expectation).

69 Räisänen (2010, 86–87) refers to this trajectory as proof for the eschatological message of Jesus. If Jesus was non-eschatological, the appearance of strong eschatological emphases in his followers could not be explained satisfactorily.

70 Witnessed e.g. by the significance of Jerusalem to the earliest community: the originally Galilean leaders settled and remained there in expectation that the Holy City would become the center of God’s coming kingdom (Räisänen 2010, 91).

71 See Räisänen (2010, 98–100) for analysis on 1 Thess 4 and 1 Cor 15 to this effect. According to Räisänen, it is also noteworthy that for Paul – unlike e.g. the writer of Rev 21:2 – the spiritual Jerusalem is and stays in heaven (Gal 4:26, Phil 3:20). Furthermore, Räisänen considers it “hardly a coincidence that, unlike the Synoptic tradition, Paul never states that the kingdom ‘comes’”.

72 Räisänen 2010, 101.

oneself in a heavenly one. Instead of a collective judgment at parousia, a private judgment immediately upon death is envisioned.⁷³ But most importantly for Paul, death is the gateway to being united with the Lord. In fact, the idea of *being with Christ* as the main goal recurs emphatically in both strands of Paul's eschatological thinking (see e.g. 1 Thess 4:17 and Phil 1:23). This is not surprising in light of the central role of participation in Christ in Paul's soteriology.

As for developmental lines regarding the two eschatological strands, it seems that for Paul the parousia-centered thinking eventually fell more into the background. This was due both to the delay of the coming of Christ and Paul's own impending death. In fact, emphasis on the resurrection of the believers to begin with seems to have followed from the delay of the parousia. From 1 Thess it can be inferred that Paul originally believed that Christ would return before any of the believers died. But when deaths did occur, Paul was forced to explain the participation of these deceased believers in the parousia through the idea of resurrection. Later, emphasis shifted even more to the question of individual resurrection and away from parousia, not least because Paul himself began to suspect that he would die before the coming of Christ.⁷⁴ According to Räisänen "Paul never ceased to wait for the parousia ... but its significance diminished".⁷⁵

For the purposes of the present chapter, it is, however, most important to note that Paul's eschatological thinking is constantly determined by a tension between what has already taken place in history and in the believer's life and what is yet to be expected, the aspect frequently referred to as Paul's "already-not yet" framework.⁷⁶ This tension persists regardless of Paul's vacillation between a Hellenistic-individualized and parousia-centered view of future events. From a historical point of view, Paul builds on a traditional Jewish worldview, in which time is divided in two between the present age and the Messianic age to come. However, with Jesus' earthly life, death and resurrection "the end did not come: the dead were not raised; the judgment did not take place", and this resulted in a further division: while the age to come was already inaugurated in a real sense in Christ's resurrection, Christ would come

73 Individual judgement immediately after death is also envisaged in the Jewish *Testament of Abraham* (long recension A, 11–14), roughly contemporary to Paul (Lehtipuu 2004, 136).

74 "When [Paul] realized that he might die before the parousia, this led to eschatological statements oriented to his own individual destiny." (Schnelle 2003, 587).

75 See Räisänen 2010, 98–102. Schnelle (2003, 586–587) admits that Paul adjusted his eschatological thinking in light of the delay, but believes that the (postponed) parousia still remained the foundation of Paul's eschatology.

76 For a sound overview see Dunn 1998, 466–472.

back again (or the individual would go to him), and bring history to its end.⁷⁷ This means that “in the gap opened up between the two comings of Christ, the ages overlap”.⁷⁸

This, together with the spiritualizing tendency, explains how Paul is able to depict eschatological realities to such a large extent as present in this-worldly life. His experience of the Spirit – intertwined and often interchangeable with his present encounter with the risen Lord – is concrete foretaste of things to come. In fact, Paul considers the Spirit a tangible guarantee for the future eschatological promises (2 Cor 1:22, 5:5, Rom 8:23). Furthermore, he can describe the kingdom of God in present, participatory terms as “not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom 14:17), and state that the kingdom appears in this world, “not in talk but in power” (1 Cor 4:20). As for resurrection, while Paul generally reserves it for the future (either in collective or individual form), in Rom 6:1–6 he, in fact, comes very close to saying that baptism effects resurrection of the believer.⁷⁹ Furthermore, as we have already seen, he can state that Christ’s “resurrection power” is experienceable in this life (Phil 3:10).

Some strands of later Christian tradition ended up emphasizing the “already”-side of salvation at the cost of the “not yet”. This trend is generally called “realized eschatology” (or “over-realized eschatology”). Essential to these views is a claim that certain qualities or salvational promises elsewhere restricted to the end-times are possessed already in the present.⁸⁰ The view of resurrection as already realized in this life is clearly expressed already inside the NT. The early deutero-Pauline Colossians (3:1–4) and Ephesians (2:5–6) go further than Paul in Rom 6 and expressly link resurrection with baptism. The author of the deutero-Pauline 2 Tim 2:18 deplores that certain Hymeneus and Philetus erroneously teach that the resurrection has already happened

77 Dunn 1998, 463. Schnelle (2005, 578–580) puts more emphasis on the present reality of salvation, which is possible because of the “fundamentally participatory character of Pauline eschatology”. He rejects talk of an “already and not yet of salvation”, as he believes Paul exhibits no real eschatological reservation, only “a temporal qualification”.

78 Dunn 1998, 464.

79 Schnelle (2005, 579) believes Paul’s careful avoidance of actually saying so is due to his earlier experience of faulty eschatological emphases in Corinth. To my mind, the passage is far from a clear statement against realized eschatology.

80 Martin’s (1995, 105) formulation of realized eschatology deserves to be quoted at length. He says that the current consensus (in 1995) concerning the Corinthian situation was that of “realized eschatology”, which meant that the Corinthians had “appropriated promises of salvation that, originally in Christian preaching, were seen as reserved for the eschaton and the future establishment of the kingdom of God and had transferred those soteriological benefits to the present.”

(περὶ τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἡστόχησαν, λέγοντες ἀνάστασιν ἤδη γεγονέναι)⁸¹ – possibly in critique of the views reflected in Col, Eph and the like.⁸² The theme recurs consistently in a host of other later Christian material as well, especially in the so-called Gnostic sources.⁸³ Below we will discuss the much debated question whether Paul's correspondence, Philippians in particular, reveals that he already encountered views like these in his churches.

In terms of eschatology, Philippians is a fairly representative mixture of Paul's different emphases. The parousia-centered view is most visible in 3:20–21, where Paul voices the expectation that Christ will come from heaven and transform the bodies of the believers to the likeness of his own glorious body. The imagery combines those of 1 Thess 4 and 1 Cor 15. The idea of Christ descending from heaven invokes 1 Thess 4:16, whereas the interest in the transformation of the believers' bodies recalls 1 Cor 15:51–52 (as well as Rom 8:11, 23). The mention of the power by which Christ transforms the bodies resembles 1 Cor 15:25–28. Other futuristic statements in Phil include three references to “the day of Christ” (1:6, 10; 2:16), and the somewhat surprising (or simply conventional) exclamation “the Lord is near!” at the end of the letter (4:5).

However, as can be expected of Paul's last letter, individualized, transcendent reflection is dominant. Paul is clearly aware of the possibility that he will suffer death as a martyr soon, before the parousia (1:20, 2:17). His depiction of death in 1:22–23 rings like a simplified version of 2 Cor 5:1–10: Paul expects to depart⁸⁴ from “life in the flesh” and be “with Christ” immediately upon death.⁸⁵

81 Whatever the view behind this statement (whether it should even be taken to reflect any kind of historical situation) it seems clear that it is not justified to simply to read this later dispute back into earlier Pauline texts (Martin 1995, 106).

82 Kelly 1963, 185. There are, however, different options as to how and when this should be seen to have taken place, and the opponents in the text have been interpreted as Jewish mystics, Essenes or Gnostics respectively (see Johnson 2001, 390–391). Whatever the view behind this statement (whether it should even be taken to reflect any kind of historical situation) it seems clear that it is not justified to simply to read this later dispute back into earlier Pauline texts (Martin 1995, 106).

83 For example, the *Gospel of Philip* emphasizes that resurrection (connected with baptism) has to precede death in order for the believer to receive anything in death (*Gos. Phil.* 56:15–19; 73:1–4). See Heimola 2010, 206–207, 211. In this light it seems that Johnson (2001, 393) is mistaken when he claims that *Gos. Phil.* represents a denial or denigration of future eschatology.

84 The literal sense of the verb ἀναλύω “set free”, “unloose” conveys an image of the soul being set free from the body. However, the verb was used idiomatically of death in Hellenistic times (Bockmuehl 1997, 91), so its informative value here is low.

85 Wright (2003, 226) points out that if we were to determine Paul's thoughts on afterlife from this passage alone, we should assume he “held a one-stage view of life after death: Christians depart and go to be with the Messiah”.

More difficult to pinpoint is the reference to resurrection in 3:11, where Paul, in the context of a highly participatory, chiastic formulation takes up his hope to reach resurrection from the dead. Whether this future (καταντήσω, fut.) event refers to the parousia or the moment of Paul's private physical death is uncertain.⁸⁶

2.3 *Previous Explanations for Paul's Eschatological Reservation in Phil 3:11–15*

Paul's references to eschatology and "perfection" in the context of the polemical material in the middle of Phil 3 have generated very different solutions. After describing participatory union with Christ in the present, Paul in 3:11 expresses a wish to be resurrected from the dead: "εἴ πως καταντήσω εἰς τὴν ἐξανάστασιν τὴν ἐκ νεκρῶν". Attention has been drawn to two features. First, the wording "τὴν ἐξανάστασιν τὴν ἐκ νεκρῶν" has been considered particularly concrete and graphic. While the expression "ἐκ νεκρῶν" in itself is idiomatic (see e.g. 1 Cor 15:12),⁸⁷ the repetition of the preposition ἐκ in connection with ἀνάστασις has been considered intensifying.⁸⁸ Bodily resurrection is likely in view. According to Gordon D. Fee the phrase contrasts presently experienceable realities (the previous clauses A, B, B' in the chiastic formulation of 3:10) with future resurrection, and stresses the fact that resurrection takes place only after physical death.⁸⁹ While Fee does not take the text as correction of faulty views, for others the graphic formulation has suggested that Paul is countering an overly spiritualized or already realized understanding of resurrection, often by the Jewish Christ-believing outgroup depicted in 3:2ff.⁹⁰ John Reumann, for example, believes a "clash over resurrection" is apparent and the opponents stress resurrection "as a present experience". He also sees Paul's unusual term ἐξανάστασις not as providing a different meaning, but as "rhetorical variation" which, however, aims at distinction from the opponents' language.⁹¹

The exact meaning of the conjunction εἴ πως (lit. "if somehow") in the same sentence has also been a source of speculation, as it seems to denote a level of uncertainty with which Paul presents his part in the future resurrection.⁹²

86 Schnelle (2005, 586) believes it "points to an early resurrection immediately after death".

87 A fact Bockmuehl (1998, 218) seems unaware of.

88 Bockmuehl (1998, 218) and Fee (1995, 337) both arrive at similarly graphic translations "resurrection from among the dead" / "out from among the dead".

89 Fee 1995, 337 n. 68.

90 Koester 1961/62, 323–324; Martin 1980, 135.

91 Reumann 2008, 523–526.

92 It seems that the question of uncertainty centers on the use of the adverb πως, since otherwise the sentence structure εἰ + aor. subj. or fut. ind. denotes real possibility, bordering on likely (see Kaegi § 183–184, 187).

Some take it as uncertainty regarding the *how* of resurrection,⁹³ others as an expression of humility on Paul's part.⁹⁴ Again, some see it as directed against opponents' realized eschatology, which, apparently, rules out any uncertainty about the future.⁹⁵ According to Marcus Bockmuehl, the wording expresses "an unusual element of hesitation about the apostle's participation in the resurrection", however, this is not "real doubt", but only serves to support Paul's stress on the necessity of the believer's constant effort and struggle for salvation in 3:13–14. Thus, he sees the wording as targeted to the audience of the letter.⁹⁶

The second, and probably major, point of interest has been Paul's denial of having already "taken" and "been completed/perfected" in verse 3:12 and his insistence that he is "pressing on" in order to "take hold of" (οὐχ ὅτι ἤδη ἔλαβον ἢ ἤδη τετελείωμαι, διώκω δὲ εἰ καὶ καταλάβω).⁹⁷ A third denial using the same λαβ-root appears in the address to the Philippians in 3:13 (ἐγὼ ἑμαυτὸν οὐ λογίζομαι κατεργασθῆναι). Interpretation is complicated by the lack of an immediate object for what Paul denies having "taken/received/attained"⁹⁸ (ἔλαβον) and what he insists on avidly pursuing (διώκω δὲ εἰ καὶ καταλάβω). Various suggestions have been made.⁹⁹ The NIV reads "all this", reaching all the way back to the beginning of 3:8.¹⁰⁰ This suggestion seems to include "righteousness" among those things Paul has not yet received (see further below). Some see the object as full "knowledge of Christ".¹⁰¹ This would mean that for Paul participation in Christ is somehow incomplete in this life. Some have opted for (moral or spiritual) "perfection"¹⁰² or "resurrection" as object – with the assumption that Paul is debating a form of realized eschatology either by

93 Fee (1995, 338) sees uncertainty as to whether the resurrection will take place through "resurrection or transformation". Martin 1980, 136: "whether by martyrdom or at a more distant time".

94 Hawthorne 1983, 146.

95 Koester 1961–62, 323–324; Reumann 2008, 526 seems less certain.

96 Bockmuehl 1998, 217.

97 Here Fee's (1995, 339) translation of terms is used.

98 The verb has a broad range of meanings such as "to take hold of", "to receive or accept", "to get or obtain", "to make one's own", "to apprehend or comprehend" mentally or spiritually (Hawthorne 1983, 150).

99 See Reumann (2008, 533) for a list of altogether nine different suggestions with variations.

100 Similarly Vincent 1985, 107 and Bockmuehl 1997, 220.

101 Hawthorne 1983, 151. Fee (1995, 343) thinks what Paul has not yet obtained is "the eschatological realization of the goal expressed in vv. 10–11, the kind of knowing Christ that will be his only when he has 'attained unto the resurrection of the dead'".

102 This reading seems to assume that the missing object is provided by the next verb τετελείωμαι, (read as a reference to perfection).

outsider opponents¹⁰³ or the Philippians.¹⁰⁴ Again, some detect no polemical tone in the text.¹⁰⁵

Significantly, in the same context Paul also denies having been made “perfect” or “brought to completion” (τετελείωμαι). The term is picked up in 3:15 where it is used as wordplay of the Philippians as “perfect” or “mature” (τέλειοι). Traditionally it was taken to refer to moral perfection.¹⁰⁶ Spiritual perfection has also been suggested,¹⁰⁷ as well as a combination of both – with Paul refuting “perfectionist” opponents, echoing their own terminology.¹⁰⁸ Davorin Peterlin sees the terminology as correcting a somehow faulty perfection by the Philippians, but pleads ignorance on its precise content or basis.¹⁰⁹ Others see the word as not so much deriving from τέλειος as simply τέλος (meaning end or goal). Linking the word to the footrace imagery in 3:14 produces the NRSV translation “not that I have ... already reached the goal.”¹¹⁰ For Ben Witherington Paul means that “he has not yet been fitted with his resurrection body which is the ultimate goal.”¹¹¹

According to Marcus Bockmuehl it is also possible that the Jewish Christ-believing opponents used “perfection”-language of their “possession of the covenant and Israelite ‘sonship’ to attract proselytes to Judaism”, and this is what Paul here counters.¹¹² Demetrius Williams, too, takes the verb τελειώω in 3:12 (as well as the noun τέλειοι in 3:15) as signs that the opponents claimed

103 Koester 1961–62, 323. Schmithals (1972, 97) considers the lack of object Paul’s intentional mimicking of the Gnostic expression of having received some form of ineffable fulfillment.

104 Jewett (1979, 373) believes Paul is countering the Philippians’ view “that in spirit one achieves an ultimacy which makes any future resurrection or parousia irrelevant”. Witherington (2011, 210) does not explicitly mention “realized eschatology” but assumes that “Paul may be concerned that there are some in Philippi who think they have arrived at the goal, simply because they are in Christ and have begun the race.”

105 Fee 1995, 341; Holloway 2017, 173.

106 For traditional Christian interpretations, see Reumann 2008, 535.

107 Schmithals 1972, 99.

108 Koester (1961–62, 322) combines moral and spiritual aspects, “it is both, but it is more: the word designates the possession of the qualities of salvation in their entirety, the arrival of heaven itself”. Similarly, Reumann 2008, 536.

109 Peterlin claims “there are in the Philippian church those who consider themselves τέλειοι”, but wants to proceed “without attempting to define it more precisely” (1995, 83, 85).

110 Fee 1995, 345. Holloway (2017, 173) suggests as the object τὸ βραβεῖον from verse 3:14.

111 Witherington (2011, 209), who also thinks that Paul’s hesitational εἰ πως in 3:11 may be “used to counter some sort of guarantee of salvation offered by the Judaizers if the law was fully kept” (2011, 207–208).

112 Bockmuehl (1997, 221) refers here to texts from Qumran, where the sect members are described as “perfect”. Reumann 2008, 554: “The link with 3:2–4a suggests a claim that, for Christians, circumcision adds a grasp on ‘success’, perfection.” Peterlin explicitly denies

their teaching made one “more complete in Christ, in the sense of having achieved an ultimate goal as the people of God, ἡ περιτομή”.¹¹³

2.4 *Jewish Christ-Believers with Realized Eschatology?*

In 3:11 Paul stresses the concrete, bodily nature of resurrection and distances it from the present by emphasizing his current ignorance concerning the specifics of the event. The τέλειος-terminology of 3:12 and 3:15 also stress that the journey towards the “heavenly prize” is still unfinished and that the one who understands this is, in fact, “perfect”. I consider this a variation of the Socratic theme about the one who recognizes his ignorance as being truly wise. While the question of the elusive object of the λαβ-root may never be completely resolved, it is nonetheless clear that the denials on the whole amount to a firm eschatological reservation.

In order to determine whether the text refers to some kind of opponents, it is necessary to decide what type of textual context and statements are in view. The general context of Phil 3 is polemical, as the chapter is framed by overtly polemical passages both at the beginning (3:2ff) and the end (3:18ff). However, a generally polemical section can also contain material of different nature. It was already noted above that the explicit statements on the opponents in Phil 3:2 recede into allusions in 3:3 and that the text then turns into Paul’s exemplary biographical story, which climaxes in a depiction of participation in Christ. It was determined that the theme of participation was not one dictated by the opponents, but rather a measure of social creativity on Paul’s part. The statements concerning perfection and eschatological reservation thus appear in a section somewhat removed from head-on polemic with the opponents, which means that due caution in gathering information about the opponents is necessary. Nonetheless, it should be noted that the three-fold denials of reaching eschatological fulfillment in 3:12 are quite emphatic. According to John Barclay we may read behind *denials* “that, *at least*, those whom he addresses may be prone to regard what he denies as true, and *at most*, someone has explicitly asserted it”.¹¹⁴ While this may be a simplification, it is clear that the denials call for an explanation.

The possibility of Law-promoting Jewish Christ-believers who represent “realized eschatology” behind Phil 3 is significantly diminished by the lack of contemporary equivalents and, consequently, *historical plausibility* (Barclay’s

that references to perfection could have anything to do with the opponents mentioned earlier (1995, 84).

113 Williams 2002, 204–205.

114 Barclay 1987, 84.

criterion 7, see ch. 2). As Qumran texts show, some Jewish groups could entertain an idea of realized eschatology,¹¹⁵ but we do not find such Jewish *Christ-believing* groups anywhere.¹¹⁶ In 2 Cor there appear Christ-believers of Jewish origin, who can with good reason be described as pneumatics, but Paul does not reveal disagreement with them on eschatological questions.

Furthermore, as is argued in this study, the Jewish Christ-believers pictured in Phil 3:2ff are essentially the same group Paul refers to in Gal, that is, the Jerusalem based community, with whom Paul engaged in continuous disagreement. There are no signs of realized eschatology in their midst as far as we can gather from any material left to us. In fact, as was pointed out above, the connection of the Jerusalem community to Jesus probably meant that their eschatology remained, in accordance to his, emphatically futuristic.

These considerations also mean that, from a methodological stand point, there is no reason to breach Sumney's caveat against positing new characteristics to the opponents on the basis of less informational and less reliable material. Consequently, it must be concluded that the rationale behind Paul's eschatological reservation is best looked for elsewhere than in an alleged correction of the Jewish Christ-believing opponents' "realized eschatology".¹¹⁷

The suggestions that Paul in 3:12, 15 refutes Jewish Christ-believing opponents' *non-eschatological* claims to perfection, e.g. through Law-observance and circumcision, are more plausible, since they do not require positing new characteristics on the opponents from less informational material. Demetrius Williams takes up an interesting parallel from Galatians, where Paul uses τέλειος-terminology against those who promote circumcision. In Gal 3:3 Paul allegedly echoes the language of the opponents, who promote some form of "finalization" of membership in God's people through circumcision, and claims this actually means "finishing" in the "flesh" (ἐναρξάμενοι πνεύματι νῦν σαρκὶ ἐπιτελεῖσθε).¹¹⁸ Unfortunately, although the textual context in Gal is highly polemical, it remains speculative that Paul is here actually borrowing the terminology of the opponents.

¹¹⁵ See Lehtipuu 2004, 145.

¹¹⁶ Noted by Schmithals (1972, 119–120) in connection with his criticism of Koester's view of the opponents as legalistic Jewish Christians with Gnostic tendencies.

¹¹⁷ Bockmuehl (1998, 219–220) refuses the assumption of realized eschatology from two basic positions: 1. the opponents cannot be a different group from the Jewish Christ-believers in 3:2ff, 2. these Jewish Christ-believers, who were Pharisaic-like in thinking, had a sound eschatology. From here, however, Bockmuehl arrives at a very strained solution according to which the eschatological statements answer to the opponents' claim that the *Gentile believers* will not be saved in the end times.

¹¹⁸ Williams 2002, 204–205. The same term is taken up by Paul in Phil 3:19 (ὡν τὸ τέλος ἀπώλεια), most probably with the same opponents in view (see ch. 8).

As even some manuscripts explicitly suggest, it is possible that Paul includes “righteousness” in the “perfection” to be attained in the eschatological future.¹¹⁹ This option makes for an interesting comparison to Gal and Rom, where Paul avidly contests “righteousness” for his ingroup *in the present*. As was already noted above, Paul’s strategy concerning righteousness is different here in Phil. This interpretation makes it even more so: Paul admits that the Jewish Christ-believers can attain some (inadequate, even wrong) form of righteousness, but differentiates the “right” kind of righteousness from this by stressing it is something so sublime that it cannot even be attained in the here and now.

In this solution Paul engages in a twofold measure: he first replaces the opponents’ concept of perfection with eschatological content and then denies it: “They are promoting perfection/finalization? Our perfection/finalization is something *better*. In fact, it is something so good, we cannot possess it yet in this world.” From a SIA point of view, Paul reinterprets a valuable characteristic of the outgroup in order to appropriate it for the ingroup. Denial of (yet!) possessing the quality serves to stress the superior – indeed divine and transcendent – nature of the ingroup’s perfection. Although I consider this overall option plausible, it remains unclear whether the Philippian audience with little previous contact with the opponents would have understood this fairly complicated measure.

2.5 *Erring Philippians?*

In 3:13 Paul continues the theme of eschatological reservation with the Philippian audience expressly in view: “ἀδελφοί, ἐγὼ ἑμαυτὸν οὐ λογιζομαι κατελθφέναι”. The subsequent text unfolds as an exhortation based on Paul’s personal example to strive towards “the upward call of God in Christ” (3:14). There are some features that stand out as possible indicators of disagreement between Paul and the Philippians. First, in 3:15 Paul takes up the possibility that the Philippians may “think differently” from him. Secondly, in the same verse, Paul calls the Philippians and himself “perfect” or “mature”, using the same τελ- root as he did when he denied having become “perfect” in 3:12.

Inasmuch as Paul himself stresses the “already”-side of eschatology, it seems at least theoretically possible that some of his own converts could have over-emphasized it. Of Paul’s authentic letters 1 Cor is generally considered the most eligible proof of realized eschatology in one of Paul’s churches. Even

119 Some early copyists (some Western texts, e.g. P⁴⁶, D) inserted *ἡ ἡδὴ δεδικαιώμαί* in 3:12. See Metzger (1994, 547–548) for discussion. Reumann (2008, 533–535) believes the phrase is original and dropped due to haplography. Also Klijn (1965, 281) suggests “righteousness” as object.

there, however, other explanations are possible. Paul's reference in 1 Cor 15:12 to some who deny resurrection has traditionally been taken as a sign that the Corinthians believed that resurrection had already happened.¹²⁰ It is, however, significant that the section contains no direct mention of a belief in an *already achieved resurrection*. Dale B. Martin, in fact, holds that the main question in 1 Cor 15 actually concerns bodily resurrection, which Corinthian "Strong" had rejected as a primitive belief in a resuscitation of dead corpses.¹²¹ In answer to this, Paul formulates a view which mediates between his Jewish apocalyptic beliefs and the more sophisticated Hellenistic thinking: he explains that it is not the "flesh and blood" -body that will be raised (1 Cor 15:50), but rather a *σῶμα πνευματικόν*, "a spiritual body" (1 Cor 15:44).¹²²

In 1 Cor 4:8 Paul ironically exclaims that his addressees have "already" (ἤδη) become "glutted" (κεκορεσμένοι ἐστέ), and "rich" (ἐπλούτησατε) and come to "reign as kings" (ἐβασιλεύσατε). But even these are not best explained as reflections of realized eschatology, but as arising from the exposure of the Corinthian Strong to "philosophical commonplaces" and "general principles of moral philosophy stemming from Cynic and Stoic traditions", where it was common to speak of the true sophos ('wise man') as 'wealthy' and 'a king'.¹²³ That the notion of realized eschatology disappears from behind 1 Cor, of course, means that historical plausibility of realized eschatology in Philippi is diminished as well.

In Phil 3:15b Paul states that if the Philippians think differently on something, God will reveal the right state of affairs to them (εἴ τι ἐτέρως φρονεῖτε, καὶ τοῦτο ὁ θεὸς ὑμῖν ἀποκαλύψει). Unfortunately, the text is ambiguous both as to *what* the different thinking concerns and whether the case is *real* or

120 Thiselton (2000, 1173) summarizes the basic argument: "If Christian believers have already been raised with Christ to a new mode of life, all that happens at death is the dissolution of the physical body, while the already existing 'pneumatic' or 'spiritual' nature continues its existence without the husk of the body". See Thiselton 2000, 1173 n. 32 for list of other proponents.

121 Martin 1995, 120–123.

122 Martin 1995, 123–129. Quite a similar view is already visible in Pearson (1973, 15) who states that "This passage [1Cor 15:12ff] has often been interpreted in terms of a 'realized resurrection'... It seems to be preferable, on the basis of the clear statement in 15:12 and the whole context of Paul's argument, to posit the existence in Corinth of people who denied the resurrection of the body, people for whom the doctrine of an ἀνάστασις νεκρῶν was an impossible and superfluous notion". Similarly Perkins (1984, 221–227). Martin's train of thought is certainly more believable than Thiselton's (1978, 525) notion that with *σῶμα πνευματικόν* Paul is proving that "only the *σῶμα* which has been transformed by God can truly be called 'spiritual'", linking the discussion to 1 Cor 3:1ff and 12:1ff.

123 Martin 1995, 72.

hypothetical. In 15a Paul exhorts “all of us who are perfect/mature” to think “this” (“Ὅσοι οὖν τέλειοι, τοῦτο φρονῶμεν”). But the point of reference of the demonstrative pronoun τοῦτο is not apparent. Some understand that it refers far back to Paul’s whole autobiographical example,¹²⁴ but, judging by the most immediate context, it seems that the idea of striving toward the eschatological goal is particularly in view. This is strengthened by Paul’s choice to repeat and reinterpret the τέλ- root from 3:12. Here the Philippians (and Paul)¹²⁵ are called τέλειοι: paradoxically, those are called “perfect” who understand that they are still on their way to the eschatological goal.¹²⁶

It is also difficult to decide whether the text suggests that the Philippians have actually expressed problematic views or if Paul is making a hypothetical point. The translation of the conditional sentence with the conjunction εἰ and the indicative (φρονεῖτε) in 3:15b is of key importance. Many commentators view the εἰ + indicative-structure in the protasis as denoting an actual state of affairs. Gerald Hawthorne notes that εἰ together with an indicative can “introduce a condition of reality, in which case the if-clause is assumed to be true” and takes the sentence as denoting a factual state of affairs rather than mere possibility. Hawthorne also reads the καί at the beginning of the sentence as adversative and suggests the following translation: “But since you have a somewhat different attitude ...”.¹²⁷ More recently the same reading has been adopted by Davorin Peterlin, (followed by Demetrius Williams), who reads the entire letter in light of an alleged disagreement between Paul and the Philippians.¹²⁸ However, while this reading of the εἰ + indicative is possible, it should never be opted for without further consideration. Generally the structure represents “a simple conditional assumption with emphasis on the reality of the assumption

¹²⁴ Reumann 2008, 559. Fee (1995, 355 n. 14) emphasizes that the common paragraphing that begins a new section in 3:12 encourages the wrong notion that only issues beginning from that verse are in question. Similarly Peterlin (1995, 83) and Williams (2002, 206 n. 216), who curiously emphasize different matters. Peterlin sees the thinking related to perfection(ism) central (similarly Witherington 1994, 96), whereas Williams believes that suffering is the main question.

¹²⁵ The pronoun ὅσοι (“as many as”) has sometimes been understood partitively to denote just one part of the Philippian church, allowing for the existence of another group of “not τέλειοι”. This reading is taken to reveal a genuine rift inside the community (Schmithals 1972, 99; see Fee 1995, 356 n. 18 for further examples). But as Fee (1995, 355–356) correctly notes, the term is here (and in many other places, e.g. Rom 8:14; Rom 2:12) used inclusively in expanded form, and denotes the whole group of addressees (and Paul himself).

¹²⁶ Fee 1995, 355; Witherington 2011, 211.

¹²⁷ Hawthorne 1983, 156.

¹²⁸ Peterlin (1995, 82) backs this reading by referring to similar meaning of εἰ in Phil 2:1. Williams 2002, 207 n. 218.

(*not what is being assumed*).¹²⁹ The situation suggested by the protasis is considered realistically possible, while a more hypothetical case would be marked by εἰ + optative.¹³⁰ So, while the most radical legitimate reading suggests that the condition is already reality,¹³¹ it is just as possible that it denotes something that the writer considers realistically possible, but not the case presently. The context should guide interpretation. Several scholars and most English translations opt for “if” in the text, suggesting only a (real) possibility. This essentially brings the function of the sentence quite close to that of ἐάν + subjunctive.¹³²

Factors in favor of a softer reading abound. Gordon D. Fee notes that the whole passage is quite casual, almost nonchalant, and compares it to e.g. 1 Cor 14:37–38, where actual anticipation of disagreement is in view.¹³³ Paul is also quite far from exhibiting the anger, blame or frustration of, say, Galatians (ὦ ἄνθρωποι Γαλάται ...). As for Paul’s exhortation to “think this”, Barclay’s distinction of various mirror-images behind different types of utterance suggests that a *command* signifies that “at least those who receive it may be in danger of neglecting what he commands, and at most they are deliberately flouting it”.¹³⁴ But this particular command is not harsh at all. John Reumann notes that the tone of all three imperatives in 3:15–17 is softened one way or another. The subjunctive φρονῶμεν is “no gruff 2nd pers. command”, while στοιχεῖν is an infinitive and συμμιμηταί ... γίνεσθε is softened by the *sym*-prefix.¹³⁵ Gordon D. Fee even says that in some ways the exhortation in this case does not even amount to a real command,¹³⁶ and approaches the passage from the point of view of ancient friendship. Fee believes Paul picks up the idea of possible minor disagreements in order to display the nature of this friendship, “which

129 Blass-Debrunner-Funk § 371 (emphasis mine). Kaegi § 184 asserts clearly: “This form merely sets forth the nexus between the conclusion and the condition; in other words: it sets forth the conclusion as real, if the condition be real – but implies nothing as to the latter.”

130 BDF § 371.

131 A function that Blass, Debrunner and Funk (§ 371) hold that the structure had largely acquired in the NT.

132 Bockmuehl (1998, 224): “even if in any respect you think differently”. Reumann (2008, 542) reads “if” but still seems to hold that actual wrong thinking, even wrongdoing, had occurred in the Philippian church (2008, 561). NRSV: “and if you think differently about anything, this too God will reveal to you”. BDF § 371 allows for only sporadic encroachment of εἰ in the sphere of ἐάν + subj. (§372) and cite Matt 5:29 as an example.

133 Fee (1995, 358) notes also that what Paul has written just above are no adaphora matters, but central ideas, that do not easily account for a casual response if true disagreement were in view (n. 27).

134 Barclay 1987, 84.

135 Reumann 2008, 559 (also n. 20).

136 Fee 1995, 359.

is so secure that Paul can simply leave it in God's hands to 'reveal' to them what further understanding they may need on matters wherein they might not be ready fully to agree with him".¹³⁷ It was determined above (ch. 2) that the Philippians and Paul were not social equals on all levels, although Paul probably did have authority in matters of his expertise. In this light, the text does sound more like rhetoric designed to demonstrate the relationship between Paul and the Philippians, as well as Paul's authority, rather than a reaction to an actual concrete situation.

In light of what has been said above, it seems fair to conclude that Paul did not write Phil 3:11–12 and 13–16 in order to correct over-realized eschatology either by the Jewish Christ-believing opponents or by the Philippian addressees. It was deemed possible that Paul refutes the Jewish Christ-believing opponents' claims of "perfection" or having reached the "goal" through Law-observance and/or circumcision by pointing to the ingroup's eschatological equivalent instead. But there is certainly more to Paul's overall eschatological statements in Phil. In the following, social psychological insights will be applied in order to explain even further Paul's puzzling eschatological reservation as well as the more straightforward eschatological statements at the end of Phil 3.

2.6 *A SIA Perspective on the Eschatological Statements in Phil 3:20–21 and 3:11–15*

In Philippians, Paul stresses both the positive and distinct nature of the ingroup identity in order to ensure its survival. This chapter applies the concepts of *social time* and *possible social identities* (see ch. 2) in order to examine how Paul does this with the use of eschatological statements.

Philip Esler stresses that present day North Atlantic societies are much more future-oriented than preindustrial, agrarian cultures, where expressions and expectations concerning the future were more attenuated.¹³⁸ Indeed, a strong orientation to the past in ancient Mediterranean culture is often reflected in Paul's argumentation, especially when he is faced with challenges arising from Jewish tradition. In Galatians and Romans, Paul's arguments center heavily on contesting the past with regard to the opponents. He spends in both letters a considerable amount of time and energy in attempting to claim for his Gentile followers central features of Jewish past, such as Abrahamic descent.¹³⁹

137 Fee 1995, 359. Bockmuehl (1998, 226) doubts a soft reading: "one wonders if this does not leave his relationship with the Philippians looking rather too anachronistically laid back".

138 Esler 2003, 257.

139 See Esler (2003, 180–194) on the differences and similarities in the treatment of Abraham in Gal and Rom.

As was already noted above, Philippians differs considerably from these two letters in that it shows almost no interest in contesting the past with the Jewish Christ-believing outgroup. The Philippian Gentile believers are not provided with fictive Jewish ancestry, but only with the status of “true” Circumcision. The reason for this difference most probably lies in the ethnic background and current situation of the audience. Since the Philippians were exclusively of Gentile origin and so far had little to no personal encounters with the Jewish-oriented outgroup, they may have had little interest, or knowledge for that matter, in myths concerning the Jewish past. In fact, there is reason to believe that Paul creates a fictive Jewish ancestry for his Gentile followers only when confronted by Jewish Christ-believers, who have already offered them a *desired and possible past social identity* as members of Israel. The matter is similar and related to what was witnessed above regarding the secondary and polemical role of righteousness-language in Paul.¹⁴⁰

On the other hand, whereas Galatians, in particular, contains notably few eschatological references,¹⁴¹ Philippians invests significantly more in the future. In fact, Phil bears a close resemblance in this regard to 1 Thess, a letter also addressed to a Macedonian church of Gentile consistence and containing similar apocalyptic imagery but practically no reference to Jewish tradition.¹⁴²

It will be suggested in ch. 8 that Paul’s polemic against “the enemies of the cross” at the end of Phil 3 (3:18–21) is most likely directed against the same outgroup of Jewish Christ-believers who appeared in the beginning of the chapter. The passage contains a series of vilificatory remarks concerning these opponents in 3:18–19 and culminates in juxtaposing the in- and outgroup in terms of their final, eschatological outcome. The final fate of the outgroup is said to be “destruction”, whereas the ingroup will be “saved” by the all-powerful Christ, who comes down from heaven and transforms the “lowly bodies” of the believers to the likeness of his own body.

140 For a more extensive treatment of the topic, see Nikki 2016.

141 According to Beker (1980, 58), “the eschatological present dominates the letter”, which can be easily be viewed “as a document of realised eschatology by a Paul who is ‘the greatest of all Gnostics’”. He (1980, 57–58) explains the scarcity of future-oriented material in Galatians as resulting from the way Paul follows the past-oriented argumentation by the opponents. Altogether three very concise eschatological references appear in Gal 5:5, 21b; 6:7–9, all in the context of ethical exhortation to the addressees. The references function to reinforce Paul’s ethical exhortation with an element of warning (esp. Gal 5:21b), that is, a *feared and possible future social identity* is used in order to promote change in the present.

142 To be sure, the apocalyptic imagery is heavily derived from Jewish tradition as well. However, the great variety of eschatological imagery allowed its use in a less ethnospecific manner.

The prediction of the different eschatological outcomes functions in a fairly straightforward manner in terms of group identity. In Marco Cinnirella's terminology, the ingroup is provided with a *desired and possible future social identity*, whereas the outgroup is depicted in terms of a *feared* future identity. The net result is a maximal distinction between the groups in favor of the ingroup. Inasmuch as future anticipations serve identity construction in the present, a depiction of the ingroup as winners-to-be naturally reflects in a positive way on how they experience themselves now. It may be noted at this point that the participatory, "already" side of Paul's eschatology brings the anticipatory, future reality to bear on the present in a very tangible form. As such it really makes for quite an illustrative example of how future anticipations pertain to the present.

It was noted above that Paul's discussion of afterlife in Philippians is for the most part individualized and transcendent as opposed to collective and parousia-centered. However, the appearance of parousia-centered eschatology in the context of Phil 3:18–21 is in many ways appropriate. Firstly, lack of eschatological material in Gal suggests that the outgroup did not generally argue along eschatological lines but focused on claiming the past. Accordingly, Paul is here probably not debating questions raised by the outgroup (as he did in 3:2 ff.) but taking up something which had been an integral part of his gospel for the Gentiles from the beginning. As the topic is introduced by Paul and not by the opponents, the measure amounts to *social creativity*. However, inasmuch as the opponents in reality held a fairly similar eschatology and considered the future as indivisible and limited "good", Paul may also be inviting *social competition* on the matter. That the text may also include a comment on the two groups' different views on the earthly vs. heavenly location of the expectations (see ch. 8), does not change this. In that case the one, victorious future is still competed over, but a less significant difference like this is also taken up in order to provide some further distinctiveness.

Secondly, parousia-centered eschatology is more collective in nature than emphases on individual life after death, which befits the context where social – not personal – identifications are in view. Paul's deepest interest lies in making sure the ingroup retains its distinct identity in the face of various threats, whether posed by the Jewish Christ-believing outgroup or representatives of (or over-identification with) the Roman society. It is perfectly appropriate that a collective strand of eschatology surfaces at this point. Furthermore, parousia-centered thinking provides a stage for contesting temporal dimensions of identity on a larger scale: what will take place is not just the inconspicuous occasion of each individual's death but a universal, historical event which will be visible and verifiable to all. Group identity will no doubt benefit more from

this strand of eschatology where the ingroup is granted a central role in universal history. It may well be that the last two factors at least partly explain why parousia-centered eschatology was able to resist the more individualistic conceptions of afterlife in the surrounding Greco-Roman society and survive down to our day, despite its susceptibility to various forms of critique.

It is my contention that the eschatological statements in Phil 3 are also intended to motivate the Philippians' to strive forward together, which in turn increases group cohesiveness and contributes to the survival of its distinct identity. From the point of view of motivation, the final eschatological outcome for the ingroup, as referred to both in 3:20–21 and in 3:15 (explicitly as τὸ βραβεῖον, “the prize”), plays on the simple idea of reward. The Philippians are offered a very sizeable payoff for their “input”. In fact, although the Philippians may already have suffered some “costs” for their identity as Christ-believers, the prize is still depicted as disproportionately large in relation to the costs.¹⁴³ Considered from the viewpoint of the so-called *equity theory* of motivation, a disproportionately large profit will motivate the “worker” to work harder, because he/she will want to reduce the psychological tension inherent in the inequitable situation.¹⁴⁴

The statements concerning eschatological reservation also have a motivational function. Firstly, as was already suggested above, Paul's denials in 3:12 most likely serve to emphasize the positive distinctiveness of the ingroup in relation to the Jewish Christ-believing outgroup. In terms of eschatology, the outgroup is not only destroyed at the end of time (3:19), but it has already fallen behind in this life: its goal is fulfilled as it deems itself ἄμεμπτος (3:6) and promotes “finalization”/“perfection” through the Law at a stage where Paul and the ingroup are just beginning their forward and upward journey. Thus, the outgroup is presented as inferior to the ingroup already in terms of the current, imperfect, earthly life. Paul can afford to admit that the final goal has not yet been achieved, because the outgroup is already left far behind. Against this background the ingroup's eschatological victory will shine all the more brightly.

As for those denials of perfection that are more specifically directed to the Philippians (3:13), the most viable explanation is one that advances from Paul's motivational purposes. It is possible that the current, “pre-eschatological” situation of the Philippians was such that costs overrode the benefits of belonging

143 As in Rom 8:18.

144 Equity theory is based on cognitive research on motivation and founds on an assumption that “people are likely to be motivated to perform particular behaviors to the extent that they are perceived just”. See Haslam 2004, 65–66.

to the ingroup. By stressing that perfection/completion is not yet reality, Paul could be *admitting* that any discontent by the Philippians concerning their present situation is legitimate. As the passage is written in first person, Paul would also be exhibiting prototypical identification with the Philippians.

However, in line with what was suspected already in ch. 3, there is also a possibility that Paul somewhat exaggerates the costly side of ingroup membership. If the Philippians were undergoing severe distress, would it not be superfluous to stress repeatedly that “this is not heaven yet”? Indeed, the emphasis seems to make more sense if we take Paul here as deliberately reminding and emphasizing for the Philippians that they, as a group, have a *need* which must be fulfilled. They lack something. The fact the Philippians were moderately well-off (financially and politically) may have meant that they did not always feel an urgent need for heavenly transformation. Secondly, the need to stress the incompleteness of the Philippians’ journey may also arise from the fact that the goals Paul offers are rather otherworldly, vague and abstract. This, in fact, makes him fare quite poorly in light of the empirical evidence which suggests that people are motivated best by “concrete, specific and challenging goals”.¹⁴⁵ Stressing the need-side of the equation may well be wise when the goal is frustratingly transcendent and the path to it is described with a tepid and vague call to “carry on as before” (3:16). It is also possible that Paul’s display of hesitation concerning his part in the resurrection (3:11) belongs among these motivating procedures. With the element of uncertainty Paul reduces the *expectancy* of the positive outcome, which in turn creates a motivating tension that increases effort and strengthens group cohesiveness.

145 This is a central tenet of the so-called *goal-setting theory* of motivation (Haslam 2004, 65).

Second Round of Denigration: Jewish Christ-Believers as Libertinists (Phil 3:18–21)

1 Introduction

At the end of Phil 3 Paul mentions some people whom he calls “the enemies of the cross of Christ” (3:18), and who he claims are destined for “destruction” (3:19). He also states that the “god” of these people is their “belly” and that their “glory is in their shame” (3:19). They are also said to be occupied with “earthly things” (3:19). There is no consensus in scholarship about the identity of these people. An astounding variety of propositions has been made,¹ the major options currently being: 1. that Paul is referring to the same Jewish Christ-believing opponents as in the beginning of Phil 3,² or 2. he has some other group of Christ-believers, most often a libertine one, in view³ or 3. that he is, in line with the alleged anti-imperialistic overtone of the passage, speaking of Gentile representatives of Roman society.⁴

The inherent difficulty with identifying these “enemies of the cross” lies in the very general, conventional, and distortive nature of the invectives. As with the accusations in 3:2, we are essentially dealing here with *explicit statements* in a *polemical context*. And again, while the passage has a high degree of certainty of *reference* (opponents are clearly in view), descriptive *reliability* is diminished by the likelihood of polemical distortion. On the whole, the present passage is even more difficult than 3:2 in terms of informativeness. Polemically atypical clues are hard to find: while in 3:2–3 Paul’s unambiguous reference to circumcision served as a sound starting point, here the accusations essentially hang in the air.

The way Paul accuses the opponents of libertinism has proven deceptive for interpretation. Those who believe libertine Christ-believers are in view take Paul’s accusations of belly-worship and shamefulness as descriptive of

1 Reumann (2008, 589) lists altogether 11 different solutions, but concludes that none of them has been accepted by the majority.

2 Klijn 1964/65, Hawthorne 1983, Perkins 1991, Osiek 2000, Holloway 2001 & 2017, Williams 2002, Witherington 2011.

3 Jewett 1970 (for comprehensive list of earlier proponents, see Jewett 1970, 363 n. 1), Fee 1995 (“wandering itinerants”), Bockmuehl 1998, Reumann 2008, Bruce 2011.

4 Cassidy 2001; Tellbe 2001; Wright 2003.

the opponents' actual libertinistic practices. The problem with view is that it builds on ignorance of the conventional and unhistorical nature of similar accusations in ancient polemic. The assumption of libertine Christ-believers is, in fact, a reconstruction based on literal and naive mirror-reading. Inasmuch as Paul here brings libertinism into play, it should be understood as unfair and distortive polemic, which aims at depicting the ingroup as morally superior to the outgroup.

The remaining two suggestions for the identity of the opponents deserve a more detailed discussion. The possibility that Paul is referring to representatives of the Roman Gentile society is increased by the verbal similarities with Phil 1:27–30 where Romans were in view (see ch. 3) and by the imperial references in the surrounding text (Phil 3:20–21) as well as earlier in the letter (mainly Phil 2:6–11). Even in this case, however, accusations of libertinism are most likely gross exaggerations.

2 Romans or Christ-Believers?

2.1 *The “Enemies of the Cross” as Representatives of the Roman Society?*

There are several reasons why scholars see representatives of the Roman Gentile society in Phil 3:18–21. Firstly, the passage bears a significant similarity to Phil 1:27–30 where, as was decided above (ch. 3), Paul refers to local Roman non-believers as “opponents”. Both passages take up the same rare citizenship/commonwealth-terminology with the use of the same πολίτ-root and promise destruction for the outgroup and salvation for the ingroup in a closely similar manner. The same word ἀπώλεια is used of destruction and the same σωτηρ-root appears of salvation/savior.⁵

The appearance of terminology otherwise known from imperial contexts furthers the case. Of particular importance is the Kenosis-hymn in 2:6–11, which contains several imperial references, and is often understood as challenging imperial power.⁶ The hymn applies to Christ some vocabulary used of emperors such as ἴσα θεῷ (cf. ἰσόθεος of emperors),⁷ and κύριος.⁸ On a thematic level, the stress on Christ's humility in the hymn is often viewed as an

⁵ Tellbe 2001, 269.

⁶ Crossan and Reed (2005, 289) read the hymn as Paul's challenge to “Roman imperial theology as the normalcy of civilization in its own time and place”.

⁷ Heen (2004, 152–153) provides examples of the term from encomiums for the emperor, and suggests that the hymn represents a challenge to the elite “transcript of power”.

⁸ Tellbe 2001, 252–253, 256.

intentional “anti-type of self-elevating earthly rulers”.⁹ Furthermore, the hymn culminates in an expectation that eventually all beings (by logic, including earthly rulers) will have to profess Christ’s lordship.¹⁰ Christ is depicted in imperial terms in 3:20–21 as well. In 3:20 Paul, for the only time in his letters, calls Christ *σωτήρ*, a popular term for deified rulers, and particularly linked to emperors by Nero.¹¹ In 3:21 Christ is also depicted as coming down from heaven and subjecting everything to himself.¹² The eager expectation of his return (*ἀπεκδέχομαι*) echoes the expectation of imperial visits, a topic which the inhabitants of a Roman colony would have been familiar with.¹³ Furthermore, Paul’s use of the *πολιτ*-terminology (elaborated below) in both 1:27 and 3:20 has often been interpreted as establishing a form of “counter-citizenship”, which criticizes, or at least relativizes, Roman citizenship.¹⁴

Some who read imperial critique at the end of Phil 3 also detect Romans in the depiction of the “enemies of the cross” in 3:18–19. Richard Cassidy, for example, understands the references to libertinism very literally and argues that Paul is castigating the immoral sexual conduct of Nero and his companions.¹⁵ Michael Tellbe too, reads the reference to libertinism literally, but associates it with religious clubs devoted to local deities or the imperial cult, which were often accused of drunkenness and carousing.¹⁶

That the letter applies imperial terms and themes seems clear enough. However, this does not unequivocally reveal what the references are meant to convey or argue, nor what the historical situation was behind the letter. Peter Oakes has made a helpful distinction of four possible explanations for parallels between Christian and Roman terminology. Firstly, the texts can rely independently on similar sources. Secondly, Christian texts can imitate imperial language in order to gain authority. Thirdly and fourthly, Christian use of imperial terminology viewed as either a reaction to Roman harassment or as an active attempt to generate conflict with imperial rule.¹⁷ Thus, only two options out of four entail a response to actual harassment and only one of these suggests that Paul attempts to generate in the readers an aggressive response to Rome. In

9 Tellbe 2001, 256. Similarly, Wright 2003, 228.

10 Cassidy 2001, 182–184. According to Witherington (2011, 156) the Philippians inhabiting a Roman colony would have to be “tone-deaf” to miss here the critique of the emperor.

11 Tellbe 2001, 252–253; Cassidy 2001, 176; Wright 2003, 232; Cohick 2013, 173.

12 Cassidy (2001, 176–177) notes of the remarkable change in the use of *ὑποτάσσω* from the earlier Rom 13:1, 5. Tellbe 2001, 271.

13 Witherington 2011, 218.

14 Tellbe 2001, 268–269; Witherington 2011, 218.

15 Cassidy 2001, 172–174.

16 Tellbe 2001, 270–271.

17 Oakes 2005, 301–307.

ch. 3 it was proposed that harassment of some sort should, in fact, be assumed behind the letter. However, it was also argued that Paul greatly exaggerates the extreme nature of the situation and that, more than anything, the Philippians may have been enticed by their former lifestyle. In this case Paul's imperial critique would not so much be a reaction to existing hostility as an attempt to *create* a sense of incompatibility between the Christ-believing community and the Empire. It is most likely, however, that this generated "conflict" was mainly meant for internal identity clarification rather than for encouraging concrete counter-imperial actions.¹⁸ Accusing the opponents of libertinism would, of course, be a potent way to emphasize the difference between the groups – with or (more likely) without a point of reference in historical reality.

2.2 *The Outgroup as Christ-Believers*

Several factors in Phil 3:18–19 suggest that Paul actually has in mind a group of Christ-believers. Firstly, Paul refers to the opponents' way of life with the verb περιπατέω ("to walk") which is generally only used of believers.¹⁹ The same term is also used in the previous sentence in connection with Paul's (and his co-workers') exemplary "walk". This strongly suggests that the two groups are compared inside the same category.²⁰ Secondly, inasmuch as Paul accuses the opponents of a morally questionable lifestyle, it is significant that he generally abstains from directing this sort of critique toward complete outsiders.²¹ In 1 Cor 5:12–13, when rebuking the Corinthian believers, Paul states that it is not his business to judge those outside the church.²² Also, the most obvious accusation, that of idolatry, is formulated from a monotheistic standpoint ("their *god* is their stomach") and not through the image of polytheistic worship generally associated with Gentiles (cf. Gal 4:8, 1 Cor 12:2). Some have also viewed Paul's tears in 3:17 as meaningful only if a group of Christ-believers is meant:

18 Oakes (2005, 320–321) speaks of Paul's "re-mapping of the universe" without a specific hope for overthrowing Roman rule.

19 According to Hansen (2009, 26) the term is Paul's "favorite ethical term for Christian behavior" and at least twenty of its thirty NT occurrences are by Paul in this sense. See Hansen (2009, 26 n. 227) for a list of examples. Pseudepigraphs use the verb of Gentiles as well (Col 3:7, Eph 2:2, 4:17).

20 Jewett 1970, 376; Fee 1995, 367; Bockmuehl 1998, 229; Reumann 2008, 593.

21 Thus, Schmithals (1972, 105), who notes that the Philippians "certainly are not in danger as Christians of taking as an example the heathen conduct".

22 Of course, 1 Cor 5 at the same time reveals that there was morally dubious behavior in at least one of Paul's churches. However, that Paul could here refer to some inside the Philippian church seems impossible. The "enemies of the cross of Christ" are spoken of as a clearly distinct group of "outsiders". Fee (1995, 368–369) sees this reflected in Paul's use of the third person instead of the second.

“Paul reserves such an outpouring of emotion for those who have professed belief in Christ”.²³ But since text is ambiguous as to whom Paul is actually crying for (it could also be himself or the Philippians)²⁴ the point is of limited informative value.²⁵

More significant, however, is the fact that Paul refers to the outgroup, not as enemies of Christ, but as enemies of the *cross* of Christ. This makes it likely that the source of the disagreement lies in how Christ-belief is interpreted rather than in this belief *per se*.²⁶ Of course, this does not denote leniency on Paul's part: to be an enemy of the cross of Christ is essentially to be an enemy of Christ. Consequently, Paul disavows the opponents the title of Christ-follower and engages in *social competition* over it.

The following closer analysis of the denigrating remarks concerning the opponents will further specify that Paul has chiefly in view the same Jewish Christ-believers whom he dealt with already in Phil 1:15–18a and 3:2ff.

3 Denigration of the Opponents

3.1 *Enemies of the Cross of Christ*

The term “enemy” (ἐχθρός) offers no clue about the identity of those so designated but serves only to label them as opponents. Of equally little help is the fact that Paul has “often told” the Philippians (πολλάκις ἔλεγον ὑμῖν) about these people.²⁷ However, as was just suggested, Paul's reference to *the cross* may carry more informative value.

The meaning and function of “the cross” in Paul is, of course, a broad question, which cannot be tackled at full length here. However, it is noteworthy that Paul uses it in polemical contexts elsewhere, for example in 1 Cor 1–4 where the

23 Hansen 2009, 265. Similarly Fee 1995, 368: “he otherwise reserves weeping and tears for those within the Christian community. Thus, he now weeps over them not because they are pagans living like pagans who have never known Christ – why make such a point at all, one wonders – but because as professed believers in Christ they should know better”. Similarly, Jewett 1970, 376; Vincent 1985, 116.

24 Or, as Hawthorne (1983, 164) suggests, simply out of frustration.

25 It seems the main function of this emotional outpouring is to enhance the element of *pathos* in Paul's argument. This enhances the gravity and urgency of the text, but does not necessarily provide information.

26 Bockmuehl 1998, 230.

27 This could be a purely rhetorical device or a reference to earlier letters, or even to earlier passages within Philippians. Jewett (1970, 376–377) certainly reads too much into this statement, when he claims that it reveals that the enemies were former members of the community who were present during Paul's ministry in Philippi.

cross represents God's foolishness in antithesis to human wisdom.²⁸ Perhaps more importantly for the current text, the cross appears also in Galatians, amid poignant polemic against the same outgroup as in Phil 3:2ff.²⁹ Two passages are especially noteworthy.³⁰ In Gal 5:11–12 Paul claims that if he were still preaching circumcision, he would not be persecuted (since “in that case the offence of the cross has been removed”). At the end of the same letter he states that those who want to circumcise the Galatian Christ-believers do so “only that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ” (6:12–14). These statements reflect a historical situation where non-law-observing Christ-believers met resistance from two directions. On the one hand, they faced internal disciplinary actions from the Jewish synagogue system because of their willingness to admit Gentiles into the group without circumcision.³¹ This caused them to lose protected identity as Jews, which, on the other hand, could generate problems from the side of the Gentile Roman society, where new affiliations were viewed as threats to society.

The cross in Galatians, thus, symbolizes the circumcision-free gospel and denotes the threats linked to accepting it as a lifestyle.³² The suffering serves, once again, as a costly signal, and is interpreted favorably for the purposes of intergroup comparison: Paul and his followers are willing to suffer for their faith (which ultimately attests to its value), but the opponents are cowards who avoid persecution for selfish reasons.

3.2 *Their End Is Destruction*

Paul's fourfold description of the enemies begins with a threat of eschatological destruction. The reference to eschatology appears here, “over against its logical place at the end”, for rhetorical emphasis.³³ It was already elaborated in ch. 7 on how the aspect of *social time* and juxtaposing the in- and outgroups

28 See further Williams 2002, 33–35. Jewett (1970, 378) reads the reference to the cross in Phil in light of 1 Cor 1, which he (following Schmithals) takes as a refutation of “gnostic denial of the soteriological significance of the cross”.

29 The connection to Gal (as well as the meaning of the other denigrative terms in the context) delimit the object of the accusations to the same opponents. This is why, for example, Tellbe's (2001, 271) suggestion that the text deals with some Roman Gentiles who “tried to entice the Philippian believers to return to their former cult practices as a way to escape their conflicts” is ultimately untenable.

30 Altogether, cross-terminology appears seven times in Galatians, 2:20; 3:1; 5:11, 24; 6:12, and twice in 6:14.

31 Martyn (1997, 562) makes the strange suggestion that it was the False brothers of Jerusalem and “their cohorts” whose persecutive actions the Galatian “Teachers” were afraid of.

32 Similarly, Williams 2002, 38. See also Gal 2:21, 3:13–14.

33 Fee 1995, 370.

in terms of eschatological anticipations works in favor of the ingroup. Here we will concentrate on possible clues concerning the identity of the opponents.

Some have rejected the possibility of Christ-believers here by noting that, despite his often belligerent polemic, Paul usually refrains from threatening other believers with eschatological destruction.³⁴ However, a closely similar threat against the “false apostles” in 2 Cor 11:15 proves that this is not unheard of. Furthermore, an element of elevated frustration must be allowed for Paul, especially if he refers to the Jerusalem-based Christ-believing community, who had just treated him to an insurmountable disappointment.

Continuity to earlier material in Phil 3 is also provided by the recurrence of τέλος-terminology,³⁵ which in 3:12, 15 possibly alluded to the Jewish Christ-believing opponents’ view of circumcision and Law-observance as somehow finalizing membership in God’s people.

3.3 *Their God Is the Belly*

The next two attributes should be viewed together, since they are grammatically connected by a single relative pronoun (ὃν, masc. pl. gen.), lit. “... *whose* god is the belly and [whose] glory is in their shame”. In practice, this means that the meaning and function of the two qualifiers should be understood to work in the same direction.³⁶ However, there has been wide disagreement in scholarship as to what this direction is. Two lines of interpretation are dominant: the references are either taken to signify libertine behavior by the opponents, or understood as veiled, derogative references to the observance of Jewish food regulations and circumcision.

In the claim that the “enemies” regard their stomach³⁷ as god, the most apparent feature is the accusation of idolatry, which in Paul is usually reserved for Gentiles. Closely similar expressions about serving one’s stomach are known from Greco-Roman sources, where reference is made to libertinistic gluttony, which stems from a denial of god (or providence).³⁸ This immediate meaning is perfectly in line with the last accusation in the text, according to which the

34 Fee 1995, 371: “This language ordinarily refers to those outside Christ altogether.”

35 Noted by Reumann 2008, 595 and Fee 1995, 370.

36 Fee 1995, 373. Osiek 2000, 102: “very closely related, if not synonymous”.

37 The word κοιλία can also denote “womb” (thus in Paul, Gal 1:15). However, reading it as a reference to the male sexual organ, is, as Fee (1995, 371 n. 36) rightly calls it, “a massive misreading” and “a creation out of thin air”. (This reading is suggested by e.g. Cassidy 2001, 173). The basic meaning of the term seems to refer to a shape of cavity (Behm, 1965, 786). Here closeness to the common Greco-Roman expression as well requires “stomach” (as with Paul in 1 Cor 6:13).

38 Euripides, *Cycl.* 334–335: “I offer sacrifice to no god but myself, and to this belly (γαστήρ) of mine, the greatest of deities”. Seneca speaks of people who are “slaves to their bellies”

opponents only “think only earthly things”. Those who mirror-read the passage as a straight-forward, informative, and accurate reflection of the opponents, conclude that Paul speaks of libertine people.³⁹

The second strand of interpretation, favored by ancient commentators,⁴⁰ takes the passage as Paul’s sneering remark on the observance of Jewish food regulations.⁴¹ It has, in fact, often gone unnoted that there is talk of serving one’s stomach in Jewish literature as well. In 3 Macc 7:11 some who gave up food regulations under political pressure are called “those who for the belly’s sake had transgressed the divine commandments”. It is possible that Paul encountered similar accusations from Jewish Christ-believers because of his liberal stance towards food regulations. Perhaps with the current statement he now turns the tables on them by accusing that they take these regulations *too seriously*. If so, this would essentially amount to an accusation of hypocrisy: just like the Pharisees in Matt 23:24, who “strain out a gnat but swallow a camel”, the opponents concentrate on dietary regulations so stringently that they become more important than God. It is noteworthy that Paul, in fact, elsewhere relativizes the question of food regulations with similar belly-language. When advising the Corinthians about food offered to idols, he has apparently stated that “food is for the stomach and the stomach for food” (1 Cor 6:13). Similar language in Rom 16:18 has also been connected to the previous (Rom 14–15) dissension “over table sharing and food observances”.⁴²

The assumption that Paul here criticizes Jewish dietary regulations has, however, encountered much critique from modern scholars. It has been pointed out that Paul nowhere else equates observance of dietary regulations with idolatry,⁴³ and that sometimes (most notably 1 Cor 9) is even quite favorably disposed to them.⁴⁴ But the problem with these objections is that they rely on

(Ben. 7.26). See also Xenophon, *Mem.* 1.6.8.; 2.1.2. See Paul’s quotation of Isa 22:13 in 1 Cor 15:32 to the same effect.

39 Here Schmithals and Koester, both proponents of Gnosticizing Jewish Christians in Phil 3, differ interestingly. Schmithals (1972, 108–111) insists that disregard for food regulations and sexual misconduct is in view, while Koester (1962) interprets the passages in line with his assumption that the opponents claimed to reach Gnostic perfection through strict obedience of the Law. (See Schmithals 1972, 120–121 for critique of Koester regarding this particular question).

40 Including Ambrosiaster, Pelagius, Augustine, Theodoret.

41 Modern commentators with this view include Klijn 1964/65, Hawthorne 1983, Holloway (2001, 134 n. 24 and 2017, 179), Witherington 2011, 216: “probably food laws”.

42 Osiek 2000, 103.

43 Bockmuehl 1998, 231; Hansen 2009, 264.

44 Fee (1995, 372 n. 39) claims the ancient reading is “much too strong a denunciation” in light of this.

a harmonizing reading of Paul's texts. As was pointed out in ch. 6, Paul exhibits a very flexible identity throughout his writings and generally conforms to the needs and expectations of the addressees. It was suggested that in Philippians Paul is very much "a Gentile to the Gentiles" and portrays Jewish identity from a stereotypical, outsider point of view which fits an audience with relatively little insider knowledge. In this context, a gross misrepresentation of Jewish dietary observance does not appear strange. Furthermore, the fact that the accusation of idolatry appears in a conventional formulation decreases its weight and makes it somewhat less "thought out".

It was suggested in ch. 4 that the original impetus behind Paul's disagreement with the Jerusalem community had to do with the question of commensality between Gentile and Jewish Christ-believers. It makes good sense that he would refer to this basic problem here in Philippians.

3.4 *Their Glory Is in Their Shame*

There is very little concrete and informative in this statement. It continues Paul's style of denigrating the outgroup by presenting it in opposition to whatever is held valuable by Paul and the ingroup. "Glory" and "shame" are both very loose descriptors and serve here to invert the status of the outgroup: their glory turns to shame; the superior becomes inferior. Reference to shame is understandable in the context of the pervasive honor/shame-culture. At the same time, however, this conventionality limits the informative value of the statement.

The possibility of more precise meanings should, thus, be approached with due caution. Three interpretive options seem noteworthy, and these are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Firstly, inasmuch as δόξα signifies God's holiness, the text amounts to an accusation of idolatry.⁴⁵ This is well in line with the previous statement on belly-worship. As was noted above, these two statements are grammatically of one piece and should convey a similar (although not necessarily the same) meaning. The reading is also supported by some appearances of αἰσχύνη in connection with idolatry in the LXX.⁴⁶ However, the bulk of the LXX as well as NT use the term in connection with the idea of *being brought to shame* by someone – usually by God in his judgement.⁴⁷ A connotation to this effect could indicate a link to Paul's first statement about the opponents' eschatological destruction. The thought of being brought to shame

45 Surprisingly many, however, read the word here in a mundane sense as boasting (criticized by Fee 1995, 373 n. 45) or pride or the like.

46 In the LXX a shame(full thing) for an idol (Reumann 2008, 590 n. 24).

47 Behm 1965, 189–191. See closely similar Hos 4:7.

is also present in Paul's wording in Phil 1:20, where he juxtaposes shame with courage (παρρησία) to proclaim Christ bravely despite the possibility of having to die for it.⁴⁸

Perhaps most commonly, shame denotes immoral, "disgraceful" behaviors. Paul himself uses related terms in connection with the Gentile Christ-believers' previous lifestyle (Rom 6:21, 2 Cor 4:2). No doubt he saw this as connected to idolatry. The word often carries sexual overtones⁴⁹ (esp. Rom 1:27) and, in the LXX, the cognate ἀσχημοσύνη is used as a euphemism for exposed genitals (Ex 20:26, Lev 20:17 etc.). This renders possible two distinct readings of the passage: 1. it can refer directly to sexual misconduct⁵⁰ or 2. it may point to the circumcised male organ.⁵¹ The latter option has received much critique – again – on the assumption that Paul never disparages circumcision in a similar manner elsewhere.⁵² But one needs only to look a few verses back, where Paul calls circumcision "mutilation", to override this objection.⁵³

It may be concluded at this point that the closely tied up accusations of belly-worship and shamefulness in 3:19 play on the idea of idolatry but are also conventional polemical references to moral depravity (see Du Toit's list in ch. 2) This is the immediate meaning of the text. However, the existence of another level of meaning should not be excluded.⁵⁴ It seems reasonable that the two utterances were selected out of the wealth of conventional accusations because they could easily be read as references to Jewish dietary regulations and circumcision as well. If this "two-fold" meaning is chosen, it needs to be admitted that Paul is indeed engaging in very unfair polemic.⁵⁵ As with the accusations of "fleshly" orientation in 3:3, here, too, the opponents are depicted – not only as antithesis to the values of the ingroup – but, what is

48 Is Paul, once again, judging the opponents because they want to avoid conflict with the surrounding society? Will they eventually be brought to shame because they lack παρρησία?

49 Reumann 2008, 595.

50 Beare 1959, 136; Schmithals 1972, 110–111; Vincent 1985, 117.

51 Hawthorne 1983, 166.

52 Hansen (2009, 264) rejects this view in the "absence of any evidence that Paul viewed circumcision and male genitals as shameful".

53 Reumann (2008, 573) tries to distinguish between Paul's reaction to Gentile circumcision (Phil 3:2) and his general reverence of circumcision for native Israelites. But in Phil 3:2 Paul makes no such differentiation.

54 Although Fee (1995, 372) deems the existence of two levels of meaning "too circuitous".

55 Osiek 2000, 102: "Paul is badly caricaturing law observers for rhetorical effect." But Jewett 1970, 379: "the polemic would have been far too gross to be effective". While it is, of course, possible that not all Paul's polemic was successful, in this study it has been suggested that the lack of insider knowledge of Judaism by the opponents makes gross exaggeration less problematic.

more, as contradicting their very own standards. The opponents are not only morally dubious, but also hypocritical, ignorant, and ludicrous: they aim at one thing, but end up in the opposite.

3.5 “*Earthly Things*” versus a Heavenly *Politeuma*

The last item on Paul’s list of invectives is again a sweeping accusation: the enemies “think (only) earthly things” (3:19). As such, this statement could just continue the previous accusations of libertinism.⁵⁶ However, the manner in which Paul here juxtaposes “earthly things” (τὰ ἐπίγεια) with a heavenly πολίτευμα,⁵⁷ opens up two additional, slightly different, options which, if ruled plausible, increase the likelihood of Jewish Christ-believers specifically in view.

The exact meaning of the word πολίτευμα is, to be sure, difficult to decipher. The term has a wide range of usages. The cognate verb for the noun is πολιτεύω “to live as a citizen”, “to be a citizen” (LS), which produces the abstract translation πολίτευμα as “citizenship”.⁵⁸ More commonly, the noun denotes a concrete group of people. It can mean “either the ruling class as a sovereign body or alternatively a variety of religious, ethnic or other associations within the larger polis”.⁵⁹ A colony of Rome, such as Philippi, could also be called a πολίτευμα (although Luke calls Philippi κολωνία).⁶⁰ If this is what Paul has in mind here, he could be contrasting the requirements of earthly Roman citizenship with a more binding commitment to a heavenly rule.⁶¹

It should, however, be noted that the largely autonomous and quite privileged Jewish communities outside Palestine could also be called *politeumata*. This is attested in Jewish literature, such as *The Letter of Aristeas* and Philo,⁶² as well as in honorary inscriptions from Berenice, Cyrenaica.⁶³ The recently

56 Fee 1995, 374: “sums up the preceding two clauses”.

57 Fee (1995, 377 n. 13) rejects the adversative reading of γάρ at this point, but takes the personal pronoun “our” to be strongly contrastive (n. 14).

58 This translation is, however, “poorly attested” according to Fee 1995, 378 n. 17.

59 Bockmuehl 1998, 233. Reumann 2008, 576: “evidence is strong for politeuma as a civic association, like a thiasos or collegium”. Similarly, Tellbe 2001, 271.

60 Fee 1995, 378 n. 17.

61 Thus Cassidy 2001, 176: “Paul is actually asserting a standard beyond the standards of the empire and a status more ultimate than the status of Roman citizenship”. Similarly Tellbe 2001, 273. See Cohick 2013, 172 for others.

62 Also, 2 Macc 12:7 speaks of “the *politeuma* of Joppa”. Philo uses the term for Jewish communities outside Judea (*Gig.* 61; *Conf.* 78). See Bockmuehl 1998, 233; Tellbe 1994, 116–117; Cohick 2013, 180. The mention of *politeuma* in connection with the Alexandrian Jews in the *Letter of Aristeas* (310) is not completely unproblematic (see Barclay 1996, 43 n. 73 and Hakola 2015, 50).

63 The inscriptions (CIG 5361–5362) date from 12–13 BCE.

published papyri from Herakleopolis, thus pertaining particularly to Egyptian Jews, have provided the latest clear evidence of the term.⁶⁴ If, indeed, this is Paul's sense here,⁶⁵ his point is clearly to relativize the privileges of belonging to a legitimate Jewish community – a status which could be achieved through circumcision and observance of the Mosaic Law.⁶⁶ On this reading, what is contrasted is the ingroup's non-compromising, costly commitment to Christ and the allegedly safety-seeking and calculating (= not costly) behavior of the Jewish Christ-believing opponents. An often-noted problem with both above suggestions is that, literally read, Paul says that the "colony" of the ingroup is in heaven. We would expect him to say the opposite – that the earthly community is a colony of heaven.⁶⁷ However, complete consistency should not always be expected from Paul's (or anyone else's) use of metaphorical imagery. The main point here seems not to be in producing a point-by-point analogy, but 1. in denigrating the outgroup by questioning their motivation and by portraying their identity as ephemeral and, consequently, lower in status and 2. in providing transcendent, higher status legitimation for the ingroup identity.

There is also a possibility that the juxtaposition of heavenly and earthly realities here reflects a difference in eschatological thinking between the Jerusalem-based Jewish Christ-believing outgroup and the Pauline ingroup. Although the groups, for the most part, professed a largely similar futuristic eschatology, they seem to have differed somewhat with regard to the expected location of the eschatological kingdom of Christ. Whereas the earliest Christ-believing community expected that the Holy City would become the center of an earthly kingdom, Paul, for the most part, looked forward to a heavenly kingdom. That Paul could and would make use of this difference in polemical

64 The papyri (mostly juridical appeals) date from 144/3 to 133/2 BCE. They were published in 2001 by Cowey and Maresch, who argue that the Jewish *politeuma* of Herakleopolis was originally a military colony (2001, 3–4). See also Kugler's entry in *Eerdman's Dictionary of Early Judaism*, 2010. For reactions and discussion of the value of the papyri, see Hakola 2015, 50–51. Kasher (2002, 268), for example, concludes his review of Cowey and Maresch's work by saying that the Herakleopolis papyri "give us ultimate proof for the existence of a Jewish *politeuma* on Egyptian soil" and prove that "the *politeuma* theory is quite real after all, and by no means an historiographic legend".

65 Thus Pilhofer 1995, 130–134.

66 Thus Perkins 1991, 102: "Christians ... cannot invoke the links between Christianity and Judaism to establish their claim to a place within the city." Cohick (2013, 174) refutes an anti-imperial reading here and deplores that it does not "fully appreciate the pressing situation faced by Paul in his efforts to distinguish the place of law vis-a-vis Christ". Although her final stance remains somewhat vague, she does link the discourse to the "enemies of the cross" whom she considers the same group as the ones in the beginning of Phil 3, and suggests that "Paul rejects their definition of Christian community" (2013, 180–181).

67 Fee 1995, 378 n. 17.

contexts is evident from Gal 4, where he juxtaposes an earthly Jerusalem with a heavenly one, claiming that “the present Jerusalem ... is in slavery with her children”, whereas “the Jerusalem above ... is free, and she is our mother” (4:25–26).

A continuing debate between earthly and heavenly eschatological emphases can be detected inside the NT and in later material as well. The author of the deutero-Pauline Colossians not only criticizes the author of Revelations for his commitment to Jewish customs (3:16, 20–23), but, possibly, also for his (millenarian) earthly eschatology (Col 3:1–2).⁶⁸ In fact, questions of eschatology and afterlife later became important when various Christian groups wanted to distinguish themselves from each other.⁶⁹ As concrete differences may have been harder to come by, abstract ones could be found and even created in the realm of transcendent eschatological speculation. Paul himself could, of course, point out more concrete differences than this between himself and the outgroup. However, when it came to eschatology, the groups were largely in concert. By taking up a smaller difference like this, Paul would essentially be engaging in a very basic measure of categorization through *accentuation*, that is, through exaggerating differences between the in- and outgroups. Again, it remains unclear whether the Philippians with little first-hand knowledge of the outgroup would have understood this.

Historically, the case of the second century teacher Cerinthus provides an interesting (although admittedly later) parallel to our text. Cerinthus was criticized by the church fathers for his millenarian thoughts (among other things).⁷⁰ Curiously, the critics couple his earthly eschatological expectation with libertine inclinations. According to Dionysius

... the doctrine he taught was this: that the kingdom of Christ will be an earthly one. And as he dreamed that it would consist in these things he himself was devoted to, because he was a lover of the body and altogether carnal, namely delights of the belly and of the sexual passion, that is to say, in eating and drinking and marrying ...

EUSEBIUS, *Hist. Eccl.* 3.28.4–5

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- 68 Royalty (2002, 329–357, esp. 332) argues that the philosophy opposed in Colossians is that of the apocalyptic, visionary group in whose midst Revelation was written. E.g. O. Leppä (2003 and 2005) essentially follows Royalty's view.
- 69 See Lehtipuu (2013) for the themes of resurrection and eschatology in the labeling of others as deviants in early Christian debates.
- 70 Myllykoski (2005, 213–246) argues that of the various accusations against Cerinthus by the church fathers, that of Gnosticism is historically unfounded. Cerinthus seems, however, to have actually represented some form of possessionist Christology and chiliasm.

To be sure, the initial logic behind earthly millenarian expectation seems to have been an “innocent” hope of earthly recompense for suffering.⁷¹ What the criticism against Cerinthus proves is that, in the heat of polemic, this could be distorted into accusations of libertinism.⁷² That the same is happening in Phil 3:19–20 is possible. Accordingly, it may already have been Paul himself who suggested that the expectance of an earthly kingdom of Christ was motivated by love for bodily pleasure. If so, the accentuation of minor eschatological difference is here supplemented and strengthened by denigration of the outgroup.

To sum up the present chapter, it was argued above that with “the enemies of the cross” Paul most likely denotes the same Jewish Christ-believing outgroup he already discussed in 1:15–18a and 3:2ff. This is supported by the methodological consistency of not assuming new groups of opponents unless the text unequivocally requires it. Furthermore, although the accusations of libertine “belly-worship” and “shamefulness” are very general in nature, they seem consciously chosen on the grounds that they allow a double reference to Jewish food laws and circumcision. The socio-political situation of Jews and Christ-believers in the Roman society is reflected in the way Paul criticizes and relativizes the position of safety inside a Jewish *πολίτευμα*, something which the opponents were able to offer the Gentile believers.

71 This is how e.g. Irenaeus (*Adv. Haer.* 5.32.1.) and Tertullian (*Marc.* 3.24.5) see it.

72 To be sure, the sometimes quite colorful and sensual depictions of this expectation could provide fuel for the accusations. See e.g. Justin's (*Dial.* 81.2) literal interpretation of Isa 65:23 as a promise of offspring and Irenaeus' (*Adv. Haer.* 5.30.4) placement of Matthew's eschatological banquet in the millennium. See also Räisänen 2010, 96, esp. n. 113 and 114.

Conclusions

Many of the letters written by the apostle Paul contain references to people whom Paul portrays as opponents of some kind. The claim is that these people in one way or another threaten either Paul himself or his churches (e.g. 2 Cor 11:13, Gal 3:1). This study examined the several references to opponents in the letter to the Philippians (1:15–18a; 1:27–30, 3:2–21). Although Philippians is typically considered a very positive letter, it, in fact, contains some of Paul's harshest invective against opponents, particularly those of Jewish background. The opponents are, for example, called "dogs", "evil workers" and "enemies of the cross of Christ" (3:2, 19). The study approached these polemical references from the three interrelated viewpoints of *historical reality*, *identity construction* and *ancient polemical rhetoric*. In short, the task was 1. to clarify the *historical situation* behind the text (who is Paul referring to? what was the situation behind the letter?), 2. to describe how the polemical texts are used *to construct and maintain the identity* of the addressees, the opponents and Paul himself and 3. to recognize *ancient conventions of polemical rhetoric* in the text and to understand them in their original cultural context.

The study advanced from the realization that all the three levels of *text*, *ideology* and *real world* are constantly present in any textual communication and that the relationship between them is often quite complicated. Previous shortcomings in the study of Paul's opponents have often followed from an assumption that historical reality is "innocently present in any textual world".¹ This problematic starting point has manifested itself in a defective understanding of the conventions of ancient rhetoric and in an under-appreciation of the level of ideology and identity construction in texts. Consequently, Paul's polemic has all too often been read in an unduly literal manner. This has not only produced historically inaccurate results but also helped to foster a sense of enmity towards religious "others" (Jews in particular) by Christians, who consider themselves followers of Paul.

The study set out with a brief look at the previous scholarship on Paul's opponents in general and in the letter to the Philippians in particular (ch. 1). After this, chapter 2 presented a more detailed look into the most typical methodological problems in previous scholarship and suggested ways to develop the

¹ In the words of Hakola (2015, 4), who has emphasized the need to understand the role of the ideological, symbolic world in Johannine literature.

study of opponents through awareness of the rhetorical and ideological aspects of the text, the latter illustrated by the *social identity approach* (SIA) in particular.

In ch. 2 the relationship between the three levels of text, ideology and real world were illustrated through Kari Syreeni's *Three world-model*, which combines the dualistic cosmologies of literary criticism and sociology of knowledge into a heuristic tool for observing the three worlds and their interplay. The primary yield of the study in terms of the textual level followed from the realization that the ancient polemical conventions are not descriptive and, consequently, offer quite little in terms of historical information. Thus, when Paul calls the opponents "belly-worshippers" (Phil 3:19), he is not revealing their actual libertinistic practices. Although polemical texts pose a significant challenge to reconstructing actual events and persons behind the text, they promise much more in terms of the level of ideology and identity construction. The process of drawing borders between the in- and outgroups and defining and reinforcing identities is, in fact, often quite palpable in the text.

In Syreeni's model the symbolic world is a wide one, comprising all non-linguistic, cognitive, emotional, social and behavioral aspects of a communication. The present study, however, examined the symbolical level from the more particular viewpoint of the social-psychological *social identity approach* (SIA). The approach centers on explaining human group behavior and inter-group competition and conflict and has recently been used quite widely in biblical scholarship in investigating the construction of religious group identities. In this study, the SIA was applied to examining how Paul in Philippians delineates and discusses both the identity of the opponents (the outgroup/s) as well as his followers (the ingroup), and how he seeks to provide the ingroup with a positive and distinct identity – something which, very often, happens at the expense of the outgroup. In this process, the identity of Paul himself also became of interest, since he is not only the actual "entrepreneur of identity" in the text but also needs to position himself in relation to the in- and outgroups.

Chapter 3 of the study established a position regarding the basic introductory questions such as the time, place, and the unity of the letter and presented the general socio-political background necessary for the discussion on opponents in Philippians. The overall situation of Jews and Christ-believers in the Roman society at the turn of the Common Era was examined, with particular emphasis on the Roman colony of Philippi. The polemical section in Phil 1:27–30 was discussed in this connection. In this text Paul encourages the Philippians not to be frightened but to stand united in the gospel in the face of opposition, which he claims is similar to what he himself is experiencing at the moment. It was decided that the opponents most likely refer to some form

of opposition to the Philippian Christ-believers by local Roman officials or general populace. The lack of concrete references to violence or martyrdom were, however, considered a good reason to doubt that the historical circumstances were in reality as serious as the text suggests. It was suggested that Paul, in fact, exaggerates the mutual incompatibility of Roman society and Christ-believers in order to create and maintain a distinct identity for the Philippian believers.

The historical background leading up to the writing of Phil, Paul's last extant letter, was provided in *Part 3: Paul and the Jerusalem Community*. The central argument of the chapter concerned the relationship between Paul and the Jerusalem Christ-believing community. It was claimed, in many ways echoing the views of Ferdinand Christian Baur, that the two were continuously in disagreement over the role of Gentiles in the church. Consequently, this situation should also be detected in Philippians whenever opponents of Jewish background are in view (1:15–18a, Phil 3). The relationship between Paul and the Jerusalem-based Christ-believing community was discussed from the time of the so-called Antioch incident and the Jerusalem meeting, through the Galatian crisis, to Paul's last visit to Jerusalem before his arrest and the writing of Philippians. Concerning the Jerusalem meeting, the rather compelling rhetoric of Paul in Gal 2 was dismantled in order to uncover what the text really allows in terms of historical reality. It was argued that previous interpretations of the text have widely suffered from an undue conflation of rhetoric and historical reality. It was argued that Paul does not, in fact, reveal that the meeting issued for him a license to preach a gospel of uncircumcision. Rather, the Jerusalem meeting seems to have solved the question of commensality, which arose in Antioch, by separating the tables as well as the missions in general. It was deemed possible that Paul only later, further stimulated by conflict, fully formulated his "circumcision-free" gospel for the Gentiles. Furthermore, it was argued that Paul's last visit to Jerusalem – just before the writing of Philippians – was also unsuccessful, since the Jerusalem church rejected Paul's collection as a gesture of communion. Although this chapter focused on recovering the level of historical events, a SIA reading of Galatians was offered at the end, largely in summary of, and agreement with, the work of Philip Esler.

The analysis of the polemical passages in Philippians in *Part 4: Analysis of Philippians* begun in chapter 5 with a treatment of Phil 1:15–18a, which is the first section of the letter mentioning opponents of some kind. The passage was found to display some typical notions of ancient polemical rhetoric, for example, an accusation concerning the opponents hidden, deceptive motives. Paul, in fact, claims that the opponents preach Christ only out of envy and rivalry, with a secret intent to hurt him. Traditionally, the fact that Paul still includes these opponents in the group of Christ-believing "brothers" and claims

to even rejoice in their work has been taken as proof that he cannot have in mind the same group of opponents as the “dogs” and “evil workers” mentioned later in Phil 3. This study, however, argued that the unexpected blurring of the borders between the in- and outgroup in 1:15–18a should be understood in light of Paul’s rhetorical aim to strengthen his *ethos* at the beginning of the letter. It was argued that by a show of goodwill toward the opponents at the beginning of the letter Paul portrays himself as one who is dedicated solely to the cause of the gospel and above petty, personal animosities (which, of course, characterize the opponents). The much debated Phil 3:1 was understood to prove explicitly that Paul is talking about the same Jewish (Jerusalem-based) Christ-believers as in Phil 3. The mention of “the same things” in this verse was understood to refer back to 1:15–18a, and Paul was understood to explain his shift to stricter rhetoric and starker categorization in Phil 3 as a measure designed “for the safety” of the Philippians.

Chapter 6 of the study focused on the more acute polemic of the beginning of Philippians 3. It was decided that the opponents referred to as “dogs”, “evil workers” and “the Mutilation” (3:2) should be identified as Jewish Christ-believers with a connection to Jerusalem and an interest in promoting circumcision and Law-observance for Gentile Christ-believers. The study explained Paul’s denigration of the opponents in 3:2–3 as an attempt to diminish the status of this outgroup and remove any interest in the Philippians in becoming its member. The (utterly biased and rhetorically saturated) comparison between the in- and outgroups also served to establish a positive sense of identity for the Philippian ingroup by presenting it as the one and only, spiritual, “true circumcision”.

The biographical section of 3:4–11, where Paul emphasizes his own achievements in Judaism also brought into play the question of Paul’s own identity in relation to the opponents and Judaism in general. It was argued in chapter 6 that, in SIA terms, Paul establishes himself in the story as once a prototypical Jew (3:4–6), who made a conscious choice to reject this identity for Christ. The portrayal of a rejection of Judaism was deemed here necessary for Paul in order to identify with the Gentile Christ-believing ingroup and to present himself as its prototypical leader (3:7–11). It was argued that the text, in fact, exemplifies an inherent flexibility in Paul’s social identifications, a matter he himself shows awareness of elsewhere (most explicitly in 1 Cor 9). An identification with the Gentile addressees in Phil 3 was also detected in Paul’s application of typical Gentile stereotypes to Jews in, for example, ridiculing their circumcision. The viewpoint of SIA, in fact, offers a fresh approach to the question of Paul’s identity in general. A common procedure has been to look for a singular solution regarding Paul’s Jewishness: some see him as having completely stepped

out of this identity while others claim he remained Law-observant until the end of his life. The SIA, however, opens up a new possibility to see Paul as representing different social identifications in different contexts, namely being at times “a Jew to the Jews” and at other times – like here in Philippians – a Gentile to Gentiles. An identity “in Christ” was viewed as the most salient one for Paul (at least in the letters we have), and the reason why Paul could treat other identifications, such as ethnic ones, as having only relative importance.

In the same polemical context of Phil 3 Paul also takes up the themes of righteousness and participation in Christ (Phil 3:10–16). Chapter 7 of this study argued that the way Paul discusses righteousness in Phil 3 supports the view that it has only a secondary role in Paul’s theology. Since William Wrede many have noted that the topic never appears independently of the polemic directed to the Jewish Christ-believers, where it appears as an identity descriptor and becomes topic of *social competition*. This is the situation in Philippians as well. Interesting differences, however, appear in comparison to Galatians and Romans. In those two letters the Mosaic Law is clearly rejected as a way to righteousness, but in Phil 3 Paul is quite surprisingly able to speak of righteousness in connection with the Law (Phil 3:6, 8). It was argued that this probably followed from Paul’s attempt to depict himself as a perfect Jew before his calling, one “blameless ... as to righteousness under the law” (3:6). Nevertheless, the variety between different letters in discussing righteousness is further evidence for the secondary nature of the topic. Furthermore, the theme of righteousness soon recedes to the background in Phil 3 and gives room to the notion of participation in Christ (Phil 3:9–10). It was, in fact, argued that Paul uses the theme of participation in Christ as a measure of *social creativity*, that is, as an identity descriptor and enhancer that does not arise directly from argumentation with the opponents, but more likely represents something idiosyncratic to Paul’s belief (cf. Paul’s salient identity “in Christ”). The role of suffering in this participatory experience (3:10), in turn, was explained, not only as a legitimization of current hardship, but as a valuable *costly signal* (or a hard-to-fake sign) of a person’s commitment to a group, and a theme that eventually proved beneficial for the spread of Christianity.

The study also discussed Paul’s treatment of eschatology in the polemical context of Phil 3. Special attention was given to the puzzling statements regarding eschatological reservation and perfection in 3:11–12, 15. In 3:12–13 Paul, altogether three times, denies having already “taken hold of” or “been completed”/“become perfect”. In 3:15 the Philippians (and Paul himself) are referred to as “perfect” or “mature” for striving forward. Furthermore, 3:11 contains a unique element of hesitation (“if somehow”) in connection with Paul’s wish to be “resurrected from (among) the dead”. Previous scholarship

has often viewed these statements as Paul's attempt to set straight a faulty, "realized" eschatology either by the Philippians or the opponents. In this study, however, the historical evidence for realized eschatology was deemed problematic. Instead, it was argued that Paul's display of eschatological reservation has other functions, such as motivating the (apparently comfortable) ingroup to strive forward which, in turn, increases group cohesiveness and contributes to the survival of its distinct identity. Furthermore, talk of "perfection" may also refer to the Jewish Christ-believing opponents' understanding of circumcision and Law-observance as completion of one's status in the people of God. Another challenge with Paul's eschatology arises from the way Paul displays both individualized and spiritualized views of resurrection (1:23) as well as a more traditional, futuristic eschatology (Phil 1:28 and 3:20–21). The role of the futuristic and collective eschatology in the polemical context of Phil 3 was explained in terms of the concept of *social time* as Paul's straightforward *social competition* with the outgroup for the one, indivisible future salvation. With his insistence that the ingroup will be saved and transformed by Christ, Paul was also seen (in Marco Cinnirella's terminology) as creating for the ingroup a *desired future possible social identity* and assigning the outgroup to a *feared* one. It was argued that the futuristic and collective eschatology works better than individual expectations in a polemical situation, where it is the group identity in particular which needs strengthening and defining.

At the end of Phil 3 Paul again launches into cruel invective against a group of opponents, whom he here claims to have spoken about "many times before". The opponents are castigated as "belly worshippers" and "enemies of the cross of Christ" (3:19). Traditionally, scholarship has been divided as to whether Paul here speaks of Gentile representatives of the Roman society, the same Jewish Christ-believing opponents mentioned already at the beginning of Phil 3 or some other group of Christ-believers. Interpretation has been complicated by the libertinistic overtone of the accusations, the harsh prediction of eschatological doom, as well as the various imperial references in the surrounding context. It was argued in chapter 8 of this study that the references to libertinism should not be read as a literal description of the opponents, but as common ancient polemic, where any kind of enemies could be accused of licentiousness with little worry about the historical accuracy of the claims. In fact, this study argued that the accusations of belly worship and glorying in what is shameful can be understood as containing a double reference to Jewish practices of food regulations and circumcision. This, together with the relativization of the Jewish *πολίτευμα* in the same context (3:20), means that the opponents should be identified as the same Jewish Christ-believers as in the beginning of Phil 3.

Overall, this study combined the perspectives of history, ancient rhetoric, and social identity in order to solve certain recurring problems in the study of Paul and his opponents. Although the study focused on the letter to the Philippians, the perspectives and insights are applicable to other Pauline and ancient polemical texts as well. It was argued that a central problem of previous scholarship has been the assumption that history and text are more or less compatible. This, in turn, has led to a literal, simplistic reading of historical facts from highly ideological and rhetorically saturated texts. The current study aimed to correct this shortcoming through acute awareness of the levels of rhetoric and identity construction in Paul's texts.

This wider viewpoint explained, for example, the rhetorical motivations behind Paul's different tone towards the same opponents inside the single letter (Phil 1:15–18a and Phil 3). Furthermore, it explicated the function of Paul's harsh polemical invective in terms of both identity construction and rhetoric. *The social identity approach* was applied to demonstrate that the polemical texts reflect a basic human need to form groups and to claim for them a positive distinctiveness at the expense of others. Although this study by no means subscribed to extreme historical agnosticism – in fact, much of it focused on uncovering a realistic historical scenario behind Philippians – it still made it clear that Paul's polemical texts, as identity-forming endeavors and representatives of the exaggerative polemical culture of antiquity, cannot be read as literal descriptions of the opponents.

I hope this study has advanced not only the traditional research on Paul's opponents but also the general understanding of how early Christian identities were formed and defined and what the role of various opponents and competitors was in this process. It is also my hope that the work will help to encourage critical reading of these potentially harmful religious texts.

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